Ringing Questions

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RINGING QUESTIONS

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To the Life Partner
Who
Has Helped Me Phrase
and
Answer
The Questions
That Ring in My Own Heart

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I

THE QUESTION OF THE FIRST MURDERER

"There is no other gift that is so worthy of giving as one's own self. . . . The higher you are, the more you owe yourselves to the very lowest and least. . . . It is by the medicine of a living soul that dead souls are brought to life. . . . There is nothing so life-giving to souls as other souls warming them. And we owe ourselves to our fellowmen. The poorer a man is, the more he needs you; and the further he is from those states which belong to educated humanity, the stronger is your obligation to make him a brother."—*Beecher.*

"The quality of mercy is not strained;
It droppeth as the gentle dew from heaven
Upon the place beneath; it is twice blest:
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes;
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest."—*Shakespeare.*

"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves."
—*Paul.*

"AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER?"

MODERN scientific method has wrought sore havoc with the first book of the Bible. The Mosaic cosmogony has been shown to be untenable. The familiar Adamic narrative has been relegated to the realm of poetry and story. No intelligent reader is allowed to believe that the serpent went upright until a curse was pronounced upon it. The identity of Cain's wife, which used to vex the theologians so grievously, is to-day declared as unimportant as the color of Pharaoh's horses or the historic basis of Thackeray's novels. Indeed, the whole narrative of Genesis has been stormed with scientific bombs and stabbed by satire; and we adherents of the Book are invited forward to view the torn remains.

There is, doubtless, some damage to lament. But the story is still far from need of burial. It is the livest story in

the world. No scientific scheme will ever permanently improve upon or set aside those majestic first words of Mosaic account: "In the beginning God." Adam shorn of his theologic significance and strength is only the more significant and robust figure. The familiar serpent means more as the embodiment of that sneaking power which blights all Edens than it ever could mean in its more ancient setting. Vitality has taken the place of historicity, and these ancient pictures speak to human life with increasing force and thrill. The purpose of the Bible is most obviously moral. Not to make men smart, but to make them "wise unto salvation," is its supremest function. Its images, its poetry, all have that bearing. In such a view the book of Genesis is immortal; and in such a view I want to study this ancient question, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

It was in the first instance, as you recall, the question of Cain concerning Abel. Cain had committed an outrageous crime.

Unable to see his brother's sacrifice more acceptable than his own, overcome by jealousy and hate, he had lifted up a murderous hand against that brother. He had taken human life. But as no grave was ever deep enough to cover a great sin, the crime of Cain came out. To use the phraseology of Scripture, a brother's blood kept "crying from the ground." At length came God—sometimes delayed, we feel, but always coming—and whispering in the galleries of a guilty soul, inquired, "Where is . . . thy brother?"

You know how a single word will burn as with an iron; how a Faradic current will find the diseased spot in a human organism; how a flash of light brings out deformity and stain. So with this searching word from God: "Where is . . . thy brother?" There was not much to say. The pitiless deed was done. Argument would only weaken an already desperate case. Even as he paused for a reply, Cain could hear a familiar voice cry-

ing as if from the very earth. And he looked up into the face of Heaven, and defiantly inquired, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

O, what a question! Tinged with all meanness and streaked with murder, it has come echoing down through the centuries into our hearts. Other questions have been met and honored. A thousand inquiries have been answered and disposed of. But the question of Cain is young with an immortality of selfishness; live and burning as when it fell from his guilty tongue.

It is only a few years, comparatively, since well-churched and cultured Bostonians were asking why they should lie awake nights over the miseries of the negro at the South. What if backs were torn and hearts were broken—was that a condition to disturb Bostonians? Boston indignantly said "No!" Great men like Oliver Wendell Holmes regretted that the issue had ever been raised. Charles Sum-

ner had his back well caned for obtruding it upon the people. It took years and years for public sentiment to grow, and to this day there are Bostonians—and others—who wonder if it would not have been better had the question never been asked the slave trade of the South, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

We take a good deal of credit to ourselves for our recent war with Spain. And in so far as the Spanish war cloud was the smoke of an indignant righteousness, we are, doubtless, entitled to some praise. But be it remembered that it took a long time to rouse us to our duty. More than thirty years ago Henry Ward Beecher preached a sermon on "Cuba and the Brotherhood of Nations." Nor was his voice alone in protest. Every now and again some flaming soul would flash out the beacon of our duty. But we were so busy making money, and so afraid of international complications, we preferred to let the Cubans fight out their battle

alone. Only within certain territorial limitations did we really count ourselves our "brother's keeper."

Some of you will recall the vivid pages in *The Honorable Peter Stirling,* which describe that hero's campaign for pure milk and fresh air for the poor children of New York City. He had hard work to find supporters. Nobody wanted to go into that sort of a contest. How could ordinary West Siders be expected to care what sort of milk the East Side babies got to drink? Financiers winked at each other behind *Stirling's* back. Legislative committees turned him down. That he won was not due to any cordiality in his support, but to the persistence with which he thrust his question down New York's unwilling throat: "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Or if you want the truth spelled out in characters more vivid still, take the work of Jacob Riis. It somehow dawned upon the heart of this imported Dane that

one half of a great city ought to care "how the other half lives." Forthwith he dedicated his days to carrying to other citizens the light which had dawned upon him. People read his books and viewed his pictures. Some few kind tears were shed. A handful of the vilest rookeries and tenements were taken down. The Station Houses got an airing and a partial cleaning out. A few outposts of criminal indifference and greed were taken. But, according to Mr. Riis, the great contest lies on ahead, when New York wakes up to the tremendous truth that we are our less fortunate brother's "keeper."

I suppose that no subject is more unpopular with the average congregation than that of "Foreign Missions." To name it is to chill the currents of ordinary piety. Few Church members, comparatively, have any real confidence in the efficiency of missionary dollars. Only as we maintain the economic advantages of Christianizing the Chinaman and Parsee

do we rouse certain Christians to sympathy at all. "Is there not enough brightening to be done around here without sending men and money to darkest Africa?" "Are there not plenty of hungry hearts nearer home than India and Ceylon?" Ah, friends, it is the spirit which burned in the Copperheads of '61 and among the indifferent friends of Cuban independence; the spirit which makes the work of the *Peter Stirlings* and Jacob Riises forever bitter; the spirit which first found expression in the words of an antediluvian ancestor, and has cast its corrosion into every succeeding age—that same spirit which, reproduced in you and me, prompts us to ask when the Missionary Cause is being presented, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Let me venture a prediction. Missionary movement, in one form or another, is in the air. And it will some day be as sure a badge of immaturity and smallness to have opposed the Missionary Cause, as

to have withstood the Antislavery movement or the humanitarian efforts of our great cities.

But Cain's question comes even nearer home. We meet it not only on Missionary Sunday and in the issues of great campaigns, but on all the crowded thoroughfares of life. Some of you are employers of other men. To-morrow you will go downtown and look into their faces. You pay them wages—good wages, perhaps—for a certain amount of work. And with that exchange of values your interest in your employees ends. They are as foreign to your life as the spindles in a factory or the wires on the telephone poles. They may be intemperate, licentious, cruel; but so long as they do not drink to excess during business hours, and their excesses do not unfit them for your work, and they do not practice their cruelty upon your horses, you have no particular concern. Indeed, you do not want to be bothered with their affairs.

Do you? If I should suggest that you are your employee's "keeper" to the extent of personal sympathy and pains; that you ought to be a saving factor in his life; that you owe him somewhat besides his wages at the end of the week, would you not be sure I had better been preaching on some theme more strictly theological?

I know what it is to be bothered with countless appeals for help. Business men put a notice outside their office door: "All applicants for charity are referred to the Bureau of Charities and Correction, to which this office contributes." But the minister must keep open door to all petitioners. So I think that I can speak intelligently on this subject at least. Demands for money, demands for sympathy, demands for time and strength come thick enough some days to bankrupt an ordinary man. I sometimes catch myself wondering why a preacher need be called down from the elaboration of a high and

holy theme to listen to a dreary complaint of poverty and pain. Like the rest of you, I hate to be interrupted at a good dinner, to look into a hungry face, or to be told of some family that has not a morsel in the house. If I look cross when the thousandth appeal comes in, I do but prove how much akin to ordinary mortals we pastors doubtless are.

But then recurs this sobering reflection. It is the spirit of Cain that demands to be let alone. Our Master could be interrupted by any cry of distress. No Transfiguration Mount was so high but He would hurry down its slopes to heal a demoniac boy or feed a hungry throng. He could be approached at Simon's feast by a woman who needed forgiving. And when a sufferer stopped Him on His ministry of love to a ruler's home, and a blind beggar turned up his sightless eyes for the burdened Christ to see, He had time to pause and say, "I will. Be thou clean. Go in peace." Dear friends, it is because,

after nineteen centuries of Christian doctrine, we are still so much more like Cain than like Jesus, that we cry in the presence of human suffering and shame, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Or take the sphere of personal influence. How pleasant it would be if our conduct had no bearing on the conduct of our neighbors: if we could drink our moderate glass and indulge our pleasant vices and cultivate our particular whims without reference to anybody else. What a pity that the "weaker brother" should be always standing around, ready to be offended at our "meat!" What right has he to be forever looking to us for an example, and then falling over our harmless peccadillos into hell? Let the "weaker brother" look out for himself. We cannot be constantly burdened with his immaturity and folly! If he cannot take our moderate drink without making a sot of himself, that is his account, not ours! If he must make occasion of our infre-

quent theatre-going to visit all the indecent play houses of a great city, he will have to do so, that's all! If he cannot take knowledge of our innocent recreations except to become a vagabond and wanton—so much the worse for his style of manhood! We cannot be our "brother's keeper" to such an exasperating extent.

To which declaration I will return a moment later. Just now it is enough that I should inquire, whether it is the spirit of Cain or the spirit of Jesus which asks, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Cain's position was orthodox common sense until nineteen centuries ago. The world wagged on in its indifference and cruelty of spirit. The "law of survival," as Darwin called it, was the common law of life. The "weaker brother" had no rights which the community felt bound to respect. He who could not take care of himself must not expect anybody to take care of him. Feebleness must look out for itself.

Then, one day there appeared, on Palestinian soil, a Man of simple mien and wondrous eyes. He dared to contradict the thought of ages. He declared that Cain was wrong. He enthroned the principles of helpfulness and kindness. He went about searching for opportunities to breathe on the "smoking flax" and bind up the "bruised reed." He encouraged all sorts of human weakness and incompetence to hang upon His strength. He devoted three precious years to the education of a little band of men, no one of whom, according to our codes, was fit for intimacy with Him. He gave love and confidence and sympathy, until finally, stretched upon a cross, He could only give His life? And it was *His* message that one caught up and wrote upon the sky. "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak." "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore him." And then that tremendous utterance: "If meat make my

brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

Did you read that sententious bit quoted by Lyman Abbott in the *Outlook?* "Is Christianity a failure?" "I do not know," was the reply, "it has never been tried!" What an affirmation to make at the close of nineteen centuries of Christian history, that Christianity "has never been tried!" Yet what age ever tried it in its integrity? What generation of men was ever willing to conduct its business and make its laws on the basis of the "Sermon on the Mount?" What one of us has honestly and persistently sought to live by the Master's rule? For example, this rule of human helpfulness and pity. Cain's question still has the sting of unkindness and murder in it. Not many of us are willing to ask it of ourselves in the spirit of Mary's son.

I know, of course, what some of you are thinking. You would speak it out if

this were an open meeting. So I will try to phrase it for you.

Among the most notable commercial failures of recent years is that of the largest cooperative manufacturing establishment in the United States. For years its chief owner had tried to treat his employees according to the Golden Rule. He had invited them to his heart, to his home, and to a share in the profits of his business. He was a shining example of what some of us are hoping may yet be the prevailing tone of trade. But after years of generosity and Gospel principle, he failed!

In a not distant city live the widow and daughters of a prominent Methodist minister. During his life he drew good salaries—as such salaries are reckoned. He tried to adopt the Gospel rule. In the most practical of ways he sought to become his "brother's keeper." To no worthy appeal did he turn an unresponsive ear. He gave, and gave, and gave—

until at his death there was hardly enough money in the bank to bury him. And to-day his family are dependent upon the largess and thoughtfulness of friends. These are samples, you say, of the ineptitude of the Gospel method.

A man asked me the other day if he ought to give up his occasional glass of liquor because his neighbor could not take an occasional glass without going further; if he ought to swear off smoking a cigar now and then, as an inducement to the same forswearing by his friend; if, further, he must give up the use of veal and spareribs to meet the weakness of certain citizens who cannot eat such things. Obviously the principle can be carried to a ridiculous extreme. As well argue that because certain dyspeptics must live on milk and vichy, the rest of us should adopt that kind of diet.

There must be a margin of common sense in all things, and nowhere more clearly than in the application of Gospel

principle. The business man of whom I spoke a moment since would doubtless have been more intelligently his "brother's keeper" if he had kept back part of the divided profits to enlarge his business and thus give the employees a longer tenure. And the minister who gave his salary away to feed the poor would have come nearer the Gospel ideal if he had remembered the wife and children dependent upon him. As for the other instance, it must always be true that "one man's meat is another man's poison."

But in a thousand ways it still remains that I am my "brother's keeper." The world's real progress has all been in that direction. You may register our advance by the growth of the conviction that we owe somewhat to the "weaker brother." The rule of the jungle is "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." The rule of the Kingdom is to become some "brother's keeper." To my mind the finest utterance that ever fell from the lips of Paul was

when he declared himself "debtor" to the man who had never done anything for him. Such was the maxim of Shaftesbury when he turned from Parliamentary Halls to look up some vagabond. It was such a conviction that sent Gladstone to the garret of the fellow who swept his crossing. By such a token, only, can we account for the grandeur of Florence Nightingale and Fox, of Paul and Jesus! We shall be able to take our own grade by the acceptance of such a code for our life. The labor problem will be solved, the liquor question will be finally disposed of, and the kingdom of kindness will most marvelously come, when we begin to believe gladly, intelligently, and widely that we are indeed our "brother's keeper."

II

THE QUESTION OF AN EARLY PHILOSOPHER

"I am rising, I know, toward the sky. The sunshine is on my head. The earth gives me its generous sap, but Heaven lights me with the reflection of unknown worlds. . . . The nearer I approach the end, the plainer I hear around me the immortal symphonies of the worlds which invite me. . . . When I go down to the grave, I can say, like many others, I have finished my day's work, but I cannot say that I have finished my life. My days will begin again the next morning. The tomb is not a blind alley; it is a thoroughfare. It closes on the twilight to open on the dawn."—*Hugo.*

"The maxim that Nature makes no leaps is far from true. Nature's habit is to make prodigious leaps, but only after long preparation. . . . Slowly grows the eccentricity of the ellipse as you shift its position in the cone, and still the nature of the curve is not essentially varied, when, suddenly, presto! one more little shift, and the finite ellipse becomes an infinite hyperbola mocking our feeble powers of conception as it speeds on its everlasting career. Perhaps in our ignorance such analogies may help us to realize the possibility that steadily developing, ephemeral, conscious life may reach a critical point where it suddenly puts on immortality."—*Fiske.*

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."—*Paul.*

"IF A MAN DIE, SHALL HE LIVE AGAIN?"

Job may be pardoned for the cynical tone in which he asked this familiar question. It is a good deal easier to accept great truths for other people than to hold them to one's own heart. It is one thing to believe in justice and Providence and Heaven when the path lies through the daylight; to believe in these same things equally when the sun has set, and even the stars have hid their faces, is quite another matter. Creeds change with the barometer. The headlands which rise so clear and bold to-day may not be visible to-morrow. Whether the sky shall be blue or leaden depends upon the direction of the wind. And no devout believer of to-day can say what he will believe next week, next month.

I fancy that Job would have talked in a very different strain had he been called

upon to give his views a few weeks earlier. Then life was robust and prosperity seemed assured. It was easy at such a time to affirm the proper creed. The healthy man feels a sort of immortality within his bones. Success is a prismatic lens which edges all the distant scene with rainbow colorings. Life at its flood goes bounding on as though there could be no ebb. It took affliction and weariness and pain, the loss of health and home and fortune, and finally the dismal ash heap, to wring from Job the despairing question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" He was trying to read a chapter in the dark. He was reconstructing his code to fit the more savage facts of life. Caught in the eddy of a maelstrom that seemed to know no pity, he was crying for the shore.

But I have selected this question because men are still asking it. It is a burning question for the ages. It lay hot upon the lips of this ancient questioner. It still glows with the earnestness and passion of

countless human hearts. I do not believe there is a single question whose final answer would mean so much to men. Tell them they must not ask it—you might as well tell Niagara to stop her onward plunge, or the moon to halt in her path. Tell men the answer does not matter, and they will only look at you with hungry, wondering eyes. Tell them there are enough present things to engross mankind's attention, and they will carry this question off to a cloistered cell and ask it there. Bishop Foster once declared that he had read every English volume and monograph on immortality. A certain lawyer of fine intelligence and earnest study says he would barter all his possessions for an affirmative answer to the query of Job. His search has been an unremitting one. He has bought all the standard works. He has dipped into ancient necromancy and modern spiritism. He has attended seances and talked with great theologians. And now, with one

foot in the grave, he draws back for a final certification that there is a farther door.

In the charming letters of Edwin Booth there is one written in 1863, a few weeks after the death of his beautiful young wife: "I lie awake at night and look for her in the darkness. I hold my breath and listen, and sometimes fancy I can hear her speak away in somewhere—in my soul, perhaps; for I know that if it is possible for her to come back, she will come to me some night. She is in Heaven (they say), and I must live to meet her there. I know all this, at least as well as they know it; but I do need some sign from her, some little breath of wind if nothing more, bringing comforting words from her. I, who have ever laughed at such things, now feel mystified and half believe that such things may be. If Mary should come to me I feel that my soul would become purified. I shall no longer have doubts."

There are times when the devoutest

Christian would give a thousand years of future Paradise for the Paradise of a present word or touch. When standing in the shadows, the words of Ingersoll seem none too melancholy: "Life is a narrow vale between the mountain peaks of two eternities. . . . The skies give back no sound. . . . We cry aloud and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry." Such were the great infidel's words at his brother's open grave. O, how many anguished hearts, like his, have cried up into the skies and for answer caught only the echo of their own lamentation! In the "narrow vale" how many pilgrims have lost their way! Against those unyielding peaks how many souls have bruised and broken their wings! Earth's most fevered search and bitterest agonies are in that ancient phrase: "If a man die, shall he live again?"

Now, I might as well confess that I do not pretend to have found the sufficient answer. What the wisest minds of all

the ages have signally failed to prove, I may not hope to prove. But I do think there is something to be said. In the absence of proof there still may be precious hints. And because I believe they are specially needed to-day, I want to suggest a few of them. The impression prevails that modern science has made havoc of the last article in the Apostles' Creed. Excess of light on many subjects has seemed to throw the question of immortality into still deeper shade. Aggressive materialism has shaken too many a faith. And men are finding it harder than ever to believe, even with trembling, that a man lives on after death.

It ought not to be so. Science has not done half so much damage as she thinks she has. She has mistaken her own barking for the crash of falling walls, and counted the slain before they were fairly hurt. The foundations have not really been disturbed. Men have as good a warrant for believing in the "life everlasting"

as they had when David tuned his harp or Stephen fell asleep.

But I may be most helpful, perhaps, if I take up some of the current objections to immortality as they appeal to men. There is, in the first place, the stock argument of so-called "common sense:" nobody ever comes back. Shakespeare wrote of the "undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns." How do we know that "no traveler returns?" Might we expect to behold him with a naked eye? and hear him with a fleshly ear? If he be spirit, as we suppose, he certainly would have a hard time meeting either of these tests.

Men tell me they would be willing to go the rest of the journey without a murmur if they could talk five minutes with some traveler who had passed within the veil. I hear of mothers who promised to come back to guide their children; of wives who left their husbands waiting for a word; of friends who, in the hour of

dissolution, pledged their sacred honor to return. Who is to say they have not returned according to their promise? Who knows but it is the vanished mother that sometimes comforts so divinely? Why may it not be the spirit hand of one whom we have

"Loved long since and lost awhile"

whose touch upon our hearts turns us away from harm, away from sacrilege? "Are they not all ministering spirits?"

No thoughtful man would expect to understand the "Rhapsodie" of Liszt by holding his hand against the sounding-board of the piano on which it was being played. He would scarcely attempt to appraise the value of a diamond or canvas by taste or smell. The higher senses must come into play—the hearing and the seeing. Let a man be blind and deaf, and the world that is left to him is largely carnal. All music and beauty, all whispering winds and flash of star, all bird song and sunset, all thunder and rainbow,

all a mother's endearments and a mother's smiles, together with a thousand other precious things, would be gone.

Suppose, then, the inhabitant of such a universe should imagine that were all. He would be as near the truth as we are when we assume to pass upon the realities of the spirit world by sight and hearing. Our senses were given to serve us in our contact with the present sensuous world —not to taste the joy of Heaven, or hear the rustle of a wing, or see the faces of the dead. How absurd, then, to base our infidelic creed upon the limitations of our range. That we cannot hear the step of returning feet—what sort of warrant is that for denying that they return?

But there is a second objection not altogether dissimilar to the first. It is that the future life is unreal because we cannot conceive it except in terms of space and matter. Of course we cannot conceive it; but what is that against its reality? Not so very long ago everybody

believed that the sun swung round the earth. Men's eyes told them so, and they could construct no solar system except upon the basis of what their eyes beheld. But their eyes were wrong, as everybody knows to-day. Our imageries are constructed out of our personal observations and experiences. We have no creative power except in arrangement and combination. We can conceive nothing beyond our personal register. The centaur, as the ancients pictured him, was not a new creation; he was merely a combination of horse and man.

The novelist and the historian deal with the same facts and write the same story. The difference is that one sets down his facts in chronological succession and we call the product a history, while the other throws the same facts into the smelting pot of his imagination and we call his work a novel. The angels of mediæval art were merely sexless human beings of perfect form and grace, with superadded

wings. God was simply a gigantic man of terrible mien and reverberating tread. Imagination is forever limited by the bounds of the universe in which its master moves. That we cannot adequately conceive Heaven is not Heaven's fault, but the result of our limitations. John's vision of the New Jerusalem was in fact the vision of an enlarged and perfected Old Jerusalem. He would have done better if he had really been in Heaven; but, even so, we should not be able to understand his description unless we had been there ourselves.

We have no power to conceive a disembodied spirit; hence, science says, we must refuse to believe such spirits can exist. This is the dictum of Hume and all his followers: "Believe nothing beyond the range of the understanding." What monstrous folly! To assume that there can be no existences, no realities, no powers beyond those for which we have the pattern in our minds. It took thousands of

years for the light of the nearest fixed star to reach our planet. Had there been astronomers in those days they might have denied the existence of the stars. But the beams fell on earth at last. So it may be that the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God" shall yet dawn upon us from darkened corners of His vast universe. But whether or not it dawn while we are watching, let us never be so arrogant as to assume that the stars we cannot see do not exist.

Is it anything against the reality and valid uses of the telephone that the Laplander denies? Does the fact that a mere handful of citizens have just conception of Marconi's invention prove anything against it? "The luminiferous ether combines properties which are inconceivable in connection:" is, then, man's clumsiness of understanding to be alleged against the fact?

Let us be fair. John Fiske says that "there are in all probability vast regions

of existence in every way as real as the regions which we know, yet concerning which we cannot form the rudiment of a conception." In such "vast regions" there is room for immortality. Beyond your ken and mine the soul released from prison may "find the day." Immortality is not the desperate hazard but the rational assumption of earnest, reverent minds.

Which brings me to a third objection to immortality, as frequently alleged: the difficulty of providing a place for the countless myriads of souls. Dr. James reminds us that "for our ancestors the world was a small and . . . comparatively snug affair" which had been in existence only for a few thousand years. On such a basis it was easy to conceive an adequate abode for all the departed. Theology, too, helped by keeping down the number of the elect. Even Christians felt it hardly necessary to provide eternal accommodations for the heathen. Whereas, to-day, with the vast lengthening of crea-

tive periods and human history, with our wider view and deeper study, we have come to a point at which we really cannot imagine what to do with the teeming millions. And in our bewilderment we would sooner relinquish faith in our own immortal nature than admit the swarms of Hindus, Chinamen, and South Sea Islanders to the same sort of immortality we have been craving for ourselves. It requires too great a stretch of the imagination, not to say too great a yielding of our pride, to mentally provide for such a horde. What use can God have for Malaysians and Abyssinians?

Ah, there's the fallacy. We have small warrant for imposing our mental limitations upon the Father of Spirits. Is it not fair to suppose that His plan may include some details that have not occurred to us? He has obvious use for myriads of agents we never suspected until the microscope came. He finds space for countless inhabitants in a single drop of

water. May we not admit, then, that in all the length and breadth of an infinite universe He can make room for the poor groping sons of God we fail to recognize? His heart is still larger than ours. He knows some things that our greatest philosophers have not yet guessed. He is even more fertile of expedient than Marconi or Edison. Our dilemmas may not be dilemmas to Him, and our impossibles are quite possible to Him. I give Him credit for being divine enough to manage a vast proposition with credit to Himself and with fairness to every creature.

The last objection I want to name is the very citadel of materialism — "no thought without phosphorus; no thinker without a brain." Modern science declares that the inner life of man is purely a function of the gray matter of the brain. The idiot is a human being with an arrested brain development. The criminal is commonly a mental degenerate. Everybody knows the result of a violent blow

upon the skull. Psychology goes even so far as to locate particular phases of mental and emotional activity in special lobes and convolutions. Evidently our sensuous life is a function of the brain. Then what warrant is there for supposing the thinker to live on after the brain is obviously gone? If the brain is a harp and life its music, how can we expect music when the harp is hopelessly ruined?

The soul is not the music but the harper. The brain is only a temporary instrument of expression. Ole Bull was not dependent upon a single violin. Violins might all have been broken and he would have built a new one on which to play. Break the harp on which our souls play here and they will not, therefore, have forgotten how to play. I believe that God has diviner harps than those within our skulls; more musical strings than our network of nerves and organs; and I believe that when He takes the harper away from this poor, oft-disordered instrument, it is

only as when a pupil is promoted from the clavier to the piano—that he may find expression for all the music he has learned.

But I have occupied the time in answering objections, and there is only a moment left for the more positive arguments. Take the fact of man's longing for immortality. An isolated yearning may not be significant. That a baby cries for the moon is poor argument that the moon was intended for baby hands. But if all babies cried for the moon, and continued to cry imperiously year after year, the phenomenon would, at least, be suggestive. And when we find men of every age and rank, from fetich worshiper to Victor Hugo, all looking and longing for immortality, I believe the phenomenon amounts to an argument of the strongest kind. Modern science declares that appetence and means of gratification are balanced. We should hardly have eyes but for an objective universe to behold. John Fiske says that the cat has whiskers be-

cause there is an external world against which to brush, and from which to be defended. It is the mother instinct that makes a girl love her dolly: motherhood proves the veraciousness of the instinct. So I believe that the untutored and unconquerable longing of mankind—wide as the human race—is itself rational ground for the assurance of an immortality to meet the longing.

Or take another consideration. Unless immortality be true, the creature has an advantage over the Creator. We still play Handel's music, but Handel has passed from sight. Hamlet still lives by the fire of Shakespeare's genius, but Shakespeare himself is dead. "Is 'In Memoriam' more than Tennyson? Is St. Paul's Cathedral more than Sir Christopher Wren, its architect? Is the leaf to live while the tree dies? . . . If thoughts live the thinker cannot die." Edison is greater than any of his inventions. Beecher is more immortal than any of his

sermons. Jesus is surely diviner than His Gospel.

Then add to this the fact that a man is, often, most able to live when he comes to die. Hugo once said: "You say that the soul is nothing but the result of bodily powers. Why, then, is my soul more luminous when bodily powers begin to fail? Winter is on my head, and eternal summer is in my heart. I feel that I have not said a thousandth part of what is in me." Can a man honestly believe God thus wastes material and skill?

Remember, also, the testimony of Jesus. He said there was a life beyond the tomb. He declared His own resurrection. Was He mistaken? or untrue? Then you have the paradox of the purest mind that ever graced our earth—Himself deceived or willfully deceiving. Ah, friends, by all these voices are we driven back to change Job's question into an affirmation, "If a man die, he *shall* live again!"

III

THE QUESTION OF AN ANCIENT LAWYER

"It is especially wicked to take the strong point in ourselves and with it cut against the weak point in our companions."—*Beecher.*

"Habits of honesty, habits of prayer, are mere bondages unless they are helping somehow the production of a free, honest, and prayerful character. The only object in bandaging and twisting a man's crooked leg is that some day it may get a free straightness into it which will make it keep its true shape when it is set free from bandages; a law of liberty instead of a law of constraint. If that day is never coming, bandaging is mere wanton cruelty. Better take the bandages off and let it be crooked, if it is getting no inner straightness, and will be crooked as soon as they are removed." —*Brooks.*

"Ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith."—*Jesus.*

"WHICH IS THE GREAT COMMANDMENT?"

THE lawyer's question was, on the face of it, a fair one. He merely asked, apparently, the rule of goodness for his life. Confused, it might seem, by the multiplicity of ecclesiastical requirements, he begged a simplification of the code. He heard that Jesus could answer all manner of inquiries: might there not be some final word for the present case? "Which is the great commandment in the law?"

There are questions which enfold within themselves the agony of a heart, the movement of a lifelong struggle. Such was the question of the Trappist monk who once had marched beneath Napoleon's eagles. Upon the Emperor's defeat he had given himself to the monastic life in the order of La Trappe. Not even conversation was permitted him: perpet-

ual silence was added to the usual monastic vows. Thus passed the dreary years. But just before he died, he looked into the face of the brother who attended him, and pouring the pent-up fever of the years into a single burning word, he whispered, "The Emperor — what became of the Emperor?"

I have stood beside men after the sirocco of their adversity had passed, when the very soil beneath their feet seemed parched and lifeless, and heard them moan in an agony of loss, "What is there left?" There is an experience in which the earnest soul cries up out of its doubts and fears toward Him who broods over all continents and seas, "O, that I knew where I might find Him!" I believe that such questions find God's heart. But such was not this lawyer's question. He was merely tempting Christ, and because his question is representative, it may well repay our study.

Every student of the Bible must have

noticed that Jesus answered the real questions of men's hearts, rather than the smart phrases of their lips. He looked into a questioner's eyes and read the motive behind the spoken word. Which accounts for the seeming irrelevance of certain of His replies: He was answering the unspoken query. Take, for example, the famous interview with Nicodemus. Nicodemus had, apparently, only compliments to give. He had come by night to this new Teacher. He was ready for a tilt of words. He had a score of questions already phrased for utterance. But when Jesus spoke, it was to give a personal, searching word. I do not believe Nicodemus ever got the answer he came ostensibly to secure, but he turned away with an arrow stuck in his soul.

Or take the case of the young ruler who came inquiring what he should do that he might "inherit eternal life." For a moment Jesus apparently ignored the ques-

tion. "Why callest thou me good?" He said; "there is none good but God." And then, by the kindest steps, He led the young man back to the answer of the real question which lay in the young man's heart.

Or take the story of the penny. What guile was in the Herodians' hearts as they asked of Christ so blandly, "Is it lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar?" A careless answer might have loaded our Christianity with a weight it could never carry. Jesus saw the trick, and asked the questioners for a coin. Then, holding it before them until He could make them dig the grave of their own argument, He exposed their wretched hypocrisy and falsehood.

Or, again, take that inimitable scene beside the Temple. Before Jesus stood an angry group and a shrinking "scarlet woman." In the shame of her crime they had apprehended her. With brutal hands and many a curse they had dragged her to Him. And now, with a heartless cita-

tion of the law, they looked up into the Master's face, demanding, "What sayest thou?" For answer He stooped and wrote upon the ground. To men as black as she, to men who were themselves the cause of shame such as hers that moment, to men of every age, He had not a word to say until, wearied with their asking, He drew Himself up to a height that seemed to reach the stars, and answered, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

So with the story of the lawyer. Jesus did not answer this legal cross-examiner directly. He refused to honor a dishonest question. He who was all patience with earnest seekers for the truth, however blundering their method, and who took up into His heart men's most audacious queries, had only a rebuke for this ancient caviler. Not to forbid inquiry, but to clarify men's minds; not to discourage one honest questioner but to make him honest in his search; not to deny God's

face to any seeker, but rather to let that face more luminously appear, Jesus declined to say the thing this lawyer came to hear.

Suppose Jesus had named the "great commandment in the law." Then He would have unnecessarily offended some sincere hearers. None was so considerate of men's traditions as He who, on occasions, could show their weakness. To disturb an article of faith is always perilous. It is easier to take men's anatomies apart and put them together again than to dissect their creeds without demoralizing the owners.

Take the vivid picture in the third chapter of Genesis. We call it the story of the "fall." What caused the "fall?" Simply the unsettling of a code. Adam and Eve were forbidden to eat the fruit of a certain tree. Obedience, to them, meant one particular thing. The law was summed up in abstention from one indulgence. They were safe, according to the story, so

long as they kept that unique command. And the damage was done by a simple undermining of their faith. When the serpent had persuaded them that the commandment was not fair, the tragedy began. Banishment was the penalty for souls that doubted the imperative of law.

It has been so ever since. We take away no man's traditions except at the gravest risk. Moses found that emancipated Hebrews were far more troublesome than Hebrews in Pharaoh's brickyards. Luther was often chagrined by the extravagance and antinomianism of early Protestants. In grief and shame we Americans have lately proved that an anarchist in America is most dangerous of all. The moment a soul begins to feel a relaxing of the fetters, it wants to throw off all constraint.

This is what is breaking the hearts of many parents. Their children have come to the age at which they doubt the wisdom of certain traditions. For the

first few years a child believes anything that is told him. He never doubts that Santa Claus comes down the chimney. He will hang his head while you look under his tongue for evidences of falsehood. He expects the bears to carry him away if he fails of obedience. He looks up to your commandment as the Jews did to the smoking mount. He accepts the code you teach. But the day comes in which he no longer looks for presents down the fireplace. He knows that falsehood leaves no mark beneath the tongue. He no longer fears the bears. Then please God he may not drift from all the moorings of virtue! For every discarded tradition, a new law must come into view. With every removal of old foundation, a new stone must go into place. Commandments upon the "tables of the heart" must substitute for outward rules whose catholicity has gone.

Here also is the explanation of a certain chapter in the history of the Methodist Episcopal Church. As everybody

knows, we have a Disciplinary paragraph against amusements. What with the injudicious devotion of its friends and the sneering comments of its foes, we have not been allowed to forget it. It might almost appear that the chief end and aim of our denomination were to wave a red flag at certain crossings of the way. Few believe that the now celebrated section was inspired, and thousands of loyal Methodists wish devoutly it had never seen the day. Then why not be rid of it at once?

Ah, "there's the rub." Simply because a majority of our wisest legislators have feared that such action would be misunderstood. A few years since, when the subject was under discussion at the General Conference and the elision seemed likely to be made, the newspapers came out with the announcement that "Methodists were about to introduce dancing and card-playing as a means of building up the Church." The fact is that any retreat from our present position is bound

to be misconstrued. The present generation is worldly enough without any direct encouragement from the Church. All that some young folks need is a chance to get the bit between their teeth—they will career ingloriously. Personally, I believe the paragraph to be inoperative; and because inoperative, I would take it out of the way. But I respect the opinion of those churchmen who, in their devotion to this rule, are simply making a stand against the fearful undertow of modern worldliness.

I see by the papers that the Raines law is likely to be overhauled by this winter's Legislature. God knows it ought to be. It has worked outrageously. It has enlarged the saloon into a house of infamy. It has facilitated the traffic in human souls. It has seen more violations than any previous law. And yet the fact is that the Raines law, with all its technical shortcomings, stands theoretically against the liquor business. It aimed, not to ex-

pand, but to curb. It renders certain phases of the trade illegal. It meant to make it harder for a young man to go astray. It sought to guard our Sabbath. And there will be a chorus of protest, from all over the Empire State, at any legislation which looks like letting down the bars. Better, say many, the influence of a poor restrictive law than the absence of all restraint. Letting down the bars is perilous business. Most folks are only grown-up children.

Or, take the case of modern skepticism. Grant that Ingersoll was right; he did more harm than a thousand preachers can counteract. He encouraged men to loosen their hold on the guard rails of religion. He made them doubt the realities of faith. He helped them sneer at the sanctions of the law. He taught the right of a man to dispose of his own life—and a wave of suicide followed the wake of his lecture craft. Ah, friends, you can never unsettle a man's faith without the gravest peril.

Once loosen his grip and the "descent to Avernus" is so "easy," he may never catch hold again. Better believe some falsehood with the truth than be utterly unbelieving—which is the vastest lie.

Here is the damage of a little book like *The Philistine*. Elbert Hubbard writes with a pointed pen. He says some noble things. He rakes the dead leaves fearlessly. But a "periodical of protest" which would usher in a reign of light by an extinction of the tapers that have beaconed humanity thus far; which holds up to ridicule men's strongest ethical restraints, and takes its fling at the veriest sanctities of common life, is an unsafe guide of thought. Iconoclasm is the meanest business to which a mortal ever descends.

I have always been ashamed of that chapter in Church history. Some one says of Oliver Wendell Holmes that he was an iconoclast who "took down men's ideals so gently it seemed an act of worship." But such a hand may be as

heartless as any ruffian's, if it takes down and puts nothing in the stead. This is the meanness of infidelity. Let us make sure, then, that we disturb no sanctity until we can substitute a better. Let us leave men their traditions unless we can offer more holy shrines at which to worship.

But there was a second reason for not naming the "great commandment in the law." Men would have used it unfairly against each other. Suppose Jesus had told the lawyer that the sixth commandment was the "great commandment in the law:" the lawyer might have gone away to grade every sin by that. He would probably have excused himself for irreverence and licentiousness and theft, on the ground that he was keeping the "great commandment." And he would have condemned every citizen who failed to put the sixth commandment first. Anyway, that is just what mankind has always tried to do—to scale all evil by some par-

ticular commandment which is rigorously kept.

Here, for example, is a man who is "long" on virtue and "short" on kindness. His great commandment is integrity of conduct. He can be depended upon to keep his contracts. He would never wittingly defraud a penny. He holds every wanton thought in irons. He guards his honor with unwinking eye. But when you have said this much you have said it all. He is an automaton—and squeaks. He knows nothing about the lubricant of life. He can see no goodness in the great throbbing heart which sometimes makes a slip. How a man can get drunk or prove unchaste, he cannot understand. He has no gentleness for Magdalens and wantons.

On the other hand is a man of tender sympathies and brimming heart. He is always running amuck of legal standards. He gives away so much money that he cannot meet his note when it falls due.

He is prey to a thousand temptations on the side of his greatest strength. But what does he care so long as he keeps open heart to all appeals. Let him be generous-spirited, and it will not matter even if he does take a glass too much or break his domestic vows. His great commandment is liberality.

These types stand continually apart, misjudging and misjudged, each holding his great commandment over the other's head. Henry Ward Beecher said, in his inimitable way: "Each one of us must have a chimney through which to blow his smoke. Every man has to have something to damn." With the Calvinist it used to be the Arminian, and with the Methodist the Baptist. With the Free-trader it was the Protectionist, and with the Expansionist the "Anti." With the warm-blooded citizen it is the cold-blood, and with the doctrinaire the man of a practical turn. In the Church it has sometimes been the ritualist against the evan-

gelical, the ascetic against the pleasure lover, the second blessing against the first. Such is the spirit which has filled the world with so great bitterness; which has sundered churches and parted friends.

That is a great scene in *The Crisis* where the Colonel and his lifelong friend agree to separate. A dogma of government had come between them, and each turned away with breaking heart, simply because his "great commandment" was not the other's. May God forgive us! Who gave us the right to play pope? I have more respect for that venerable one across the sea than for the ten thousand self-constituted popes here at home. Who made any one of us a "judge and a divider" between brethren? Jesus refused that function for Himself, and when a lawyer came to ask it Jesus declined to name the "great commandment." It has never been named, and we thoroughly exceed our function when we attempt to tell men what it is.

But I may mention a third unwisdom of doing what the lawyer asked. Times change, and the great excellence of one generation is the pitfall of another. The specific legislation of the present age may not at all meet the requirements of the next. The Methodist Discipline contains a warning against slaveholding. It was a solemn warning some fifty years ago, but it is hardly worth the room it takes in the Discipline of to-day. John Wesley recommended all his preachers to rise at four o'clock in the morning that they might spend the first hour of the day in meditation and prayer. The suggestion was undoubtedly wise for an age in which folks went to bed with the chickens. But had Wesley lived in a day of Welsbach burners and incandescent lamps he might have revised the scheme.

There was a day of riotous emotionalism in the Church: to-day we are in greater danger of petrifaction. William of Orange was a patron saint in his gen-

eration, but he would have to learn chastity before he could expect the same reverence to-day. Even a Cromwell would need amendment in certain particulars if he were to step down into our modern parlors. New conditions demand new laws. The guns of a hundred years ago are obsolete to-day. Each succeeding age must make its own weapons of defense.

But what was the reply made by Jesus to the lawyer? "Thou shalt love the Lord . . . and thy neighbor as thyself." Refusing to single out a special "great commandment," Jesus gave a general law which forever includes all others. Declining to exalt one virtue at the expense of others, He made the whole fabric sacred. There was to be no boasting of man against his neighbor, so far as Jesus could prevent. All lawbreakers were pronounced forever one—the miser and prodigal together, the sensualist and the ascetic, the impure mind and the unkind tongue. There was to be no digging for

motes in a neighbor's eye while beams are in our own.

Let us remember, then, the nature of the law which Christ enjoined: "Thou shalt love." A man may keep every commandment literally and yet dishonor God. There is room between the meshes of the law for a soul to drop into hell. And the transgressor of technical commandments may be a very saint withal. You can no more appraise the quality of manhood by its outward conformity to rule, than you can determine the grade of precious ore by putting it on the scales. Discipleship is not so much a matter of particular submissions as of obedience to the spirit of the law. Every life must be lived to God. He is the final judge of every action. And love is the only atmosphere in which a soul can thrive.

IV

THE QUESTION OF A TEMPTED LEADER

"Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel, but being in,
Bear 't that the opposed may beware of thee.
Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice;
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.

. . . . . .

This above all: to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou can'st not then be false to any man."
—*Shakespeare.*

"Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's heaven for?"—*Browning.*

"Till we all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."—*Paul.*

"WHY SHOULD I COME DOWN?"

THE story of Nehemiah is alive with dramatic situations and vivid pictures. We get our first glimpse of the man at the time of his reception of bad news concerning his native city. Jerusalem lay unwalled, defenseless. Most men would have shed a few cheap tears and congratulated themselves upon their better fortune. But Nehemiah took his countrymen's sorrow upon his heart. He could not forget Jerusalem. Court splendor at Shushan served only to make a background for the distressing picture of his native city. What was he, to be enjoying luxury while his kinsmen were in want? He carried the traces of his heartache even into the presence of the king. Manly grief is always moving. The king's heart was touched, and after the recital of the story a safe conduct to Jerusalem was promised.

In due time, accordingly, Nehemiah arrived at the holy city and quietly began his work. Followers were plenty when once a leader had stepped forth. The people needed only a courageous soul to fire their own. Thousands of hands were ready for the task, and, almost before the enemy realized that anything noteworthy was happening, the walls were well under way. Not long, however, could such a work go unchallenged. The usual weapons were brought into play. Scorn, ridicule, open opposition were successively applied. And when none of these availed to stay the progress of the work, the meanest weapon men ever use was launched. By plausible agreement Nehemiah was to be led into a trap. Nehemiah saw the danger and sent back a word that must have burned Sanballat's ears: "I am doing a great work. . . . Why should the work cease while I . . . come down?"

And it is with the spirit and significance of that reply that we are specially

concerned just now. A good many centuries have gone since Nehemiah phrased the words. The work to which he referred has long since crumbled into ruin. Not even the heroic leadership of a man like Nehemiah could indefinitely postpone the doom of a time-serving and faithless people. Jerusalem is to-day, what the ancient prophets declared it would be, a "hissing" and a "heap." But the spirit of such a man is the indefeasible property of the world. It is forever passing into other souls, becoming incarnate in other lives. Great souls have an immortality on earth. Plato influences more millions to-day than he did units in his day. Seneca and Epictetus are continually reproduced. A thousand years from now men will be fusing their manhood at the altar fires of Washington and Lincoln. So, after twenty-three hundred years, Nehemiah appeals to and masters us; a man of courage, conviction, conquest; standing beside us in the interminable struggle

of the ages; pointing the path to power and peace. The contest is the same to-day it was two thousand years ago. All loyalty and faith are one. And he who triumphed over Sanballat and Geshem in old Jerusalem may speak the heartening word to us who battle still.

Three lessons, then, I learn from this ancient question. First, that no cause, however holy, escapes antagonism. On the contrary, the higher and holier the end to be attained, the fiercer the struggle to its attainment. I suppose it was so in Nehemiah's creed. He had come from Shushan expecting to be maligned. He knew that no stone would be laid except in the face of open opposition. He counted upon the fury of Sanballat and Tobiah. He recognized beforehand what some of us have to learn as a terrible surprise—that no righteous work goes long unchallenged.

John Fiske has an exquisite passage in which he describes himself as looking out

over a daisied field in early June, wooed by its marvelous voices, hushed by its tender spell, reverent before the ever new miracle of life; but just then remembering the "robbery utterly shameless and murder utterly cruel" by which all the beauty had come to be. Such is the bewilderment which overtakes many of us as we look out across the world. In earth, in sea (in sky, for aught we know), the same pitiless struggle is going on. No man may cultivate a flower or grace or public spirit, unhindered. Antagonism is the law of creation.

I remember my anger at my first discovery of this law in my garden. I had forgotten all about it in the delight of being the possessor of a little half-acre farm. I did all the things agricultural my neighbors said I should do. I had the soil well plowed and harrowed. I planted and worked over it with all the enthusiasm an amateur puts into his first attempts. I counted beforehand the num-

ber of peas and strawberries and potatoes I might expect. But when I found weeds coming up ahead of the precious seed; when there appeared to be one robin, at least, for every strawberry, and a particular bug for every vine; when my apple trees were festooned with worm nests—a parasite and foe for every living thing —my anger knew no bounds. I almost doubted the wisdom of a Creator who could permit such things to be.

Lift your vision another range and the same aspect appears. Evolution is a synonym for age-long, uninterrupted conflict. According to the doctrine of "survival" every living thing has had to fight for its life. The scientist explores a world-wide Waterloo. "In order that some race of moths may attain a certain fantastic contour and marking of their wings untold thousands of moths are doomed to perish prematurely." Fancy what it has cost for the king of the forest to gain his supremacy!

Modern medical discovery is increasing the wonder that we live at all. What with germs in water and microbes in the air, with subtle poisons in the most common foods and insidious disease on every hand, it is not so much marvel that multitudes succumb as that anybody should reach three-score years and ten. A man might drive himself into hypochondria by attempting to count the microscopic foes he must meet and vanquish every day. The ancient Scripture grows more expressive all the while: "We are fearfully and wonderfully made." Each human organism is a battleground on which the issues of life and death are fought out by pitiless, opposing armies.

History is merely another record of the same universal combat. It shames me to think that every great reform has had to fight its way. You cannot name a single movement for the dignifying of manhood or the sweetening of human life but has been stained with crimson. "The sorrows

of Messiah" are but perfect type of what every holy leader may expect, in proportion as he succeeds. Men talk sometimes about the world's readiness for a sweeping reform. The only readiness I find is the readiness of some saviors to die for it. I have turned the pages of my histories in hope of discovering an example of different spirit in the reception of the truth; but this shameful fact appears, that the world has never had anything better than scorn and hate and torment for its redeemers. Properly speaking, the world did not want emancipation or Protestantism or the Gospel of the Son of God. It did not know what to do with Wilberforce or Luther or Jesus but to antagonize them. It has nothing better for the prophets of our day. He who sets out to bless the world is likely to die of broken heart. He who preaches civic purity or social kindness starts up all the hounds of hell.

Or bring the truth still nearer home.

The harder a soul tries to be true, the finer the ideal before it, the sterner fight it may expect. We are accustomed to talk as if all a man needed were a strong determination to be good: then he might expect to glide into heaven by a sort of law of celestial gravity. Quite the contrary is the common experience of mankind. "The way of the transgressor" is not so obviously "hard" as the way of the Christian disciple. Pilgrim, in Bunyan's story, had a more provoking time than does the ordinary sinner. It seems as if every announcement of moral purpose were a virtual invitation to fresh temptation. A man never realizes how many forms the evil can assume until he undertakes to walk with God. Church membership, in so far as it stands for a clean heart and self-renouncing manhood, involves new battlefields.

A friend was telling me, the other day, of his struggle to keep the faith. He had been a drinking man, but had been con-

verted and joined the Church. The news leaked out into the ears of his old cronies. They teased and ridiculed and threatened, and finally, when all other efforts proved unavailing, they attempted to pour whisky down his throat. All of which is simply an exaggeration of the battle every man has before him when he sets out to keep himself "unspotted from the world." To pull down some aspiring pilgrim is the consummate joy of hell. We need look for no easy road. Attainment must be worth contest. A life of chastity costs many a crucifixion of the flesh. Honesty is never a garden path. Sobriety is often won by pain. The brow which is most like Jesus' must be proud to wear a crown of thorns. We must "overcome" before we may "sit down."

But this leads to the second implication of Nehemiah's question: the consciousness of high appointment which alone keeps a man from "coming down." Nehemiah was safe from the machinations

of his foes according to the strength of his conviction that he was "doing a great work." Had he not been worthily employed he might have made a fateful appointment in the plain. Men naturally seek ease and pleasure. The soul that preferentially selects a husk mattress and hard conditions is commonly a freak. We tend to move in lines of least resistance. And whenever a man does contrariwise, just in so far as he sets himself against the tide, he needs strong justification for his behavior. There is just one reasonable argument to hold men and women to their tasks—the tasks must be worth the doing.

Mothers sometimes talk to me about their boys. The boys have time only for fun and mischief. A ring at the door is a signal to drop the book. Diligence is short-lived and half-hearted at the best. Let mother's back be turned and the boys are off to play. And the boys will never do materially better, they will continue to drag on through school forms, until it

begins to dawn upon them that a lesson is more important than a game of ball or a saunter through the streets. When that thought takes possession they will have a sufficient answer to the loafers who come knocking at their door: "I am doing a great work. Why should . . . I leave it and come down?"

Men often complain to me that they are not appreciated in their places of employment. They have no prospects, as they say. I think I can put my finger upon the reason. Few employees conceive the importance of their part in the business. Their heads are full of other things. They can hardly drop work quickly enough when occasion offers. They are constantly planning how they may retain their positions on a trifle less work. In other words, missing the value of that which they are set to do, they are always ready to "come down." Business firms are looking for men of the Nehemiah stripe—men so impressed with the dignity

of their work they will not think of "coming down."

Wherever we look the same truth holds —the necessity of strong conviction. No one is safe in the presence of temptation save as he realizes the value of standing firm. I notice that successful men, in proportion as they have succeeded, in the departments in which they have won success, have been possessed of the idea that the work would "cease" if they "came down." An eminent business man once said to me that he often had to choose between business and amusement; that again and again he had declined an invitation to dinner or the theater, simply on the score that he could not afford to take the time and strength from business.

It was not arrogance that prompted Ericsson to say: "Providence has given me greater abilities for use, within certain limits, than to any other mortal." It was not arrogance: it was the sort of self-appreciation a man must have in order to

succeed. No voice could call Ericsson from his work so long as he held that conviction. He was doing too great a work to "come down." Horace Greeley determined in early childhood to become a printer. Books were his delight. He had read the Bible through by the time he was five years old. While he was still a child he was urged by a neighboring blacksmith to come and learn the trade. "No, I'm going to be a printer," was the unequivocal response. Nothing could swerve him from that intention: no inducement was great enough, no solicitation sufficiently adroit to make him forget his life choice, and he lived to become the greatest journalist of his day. He could not leave his work to "come down."

It is the testimony of his classmates that Wendell Phillips had naturally a terrific temper, but that after his conversion they could never provoke him to an explosion. Sometimes they teased him pitilessly, but he seemed to be always guard-

ing a treasure; holding a sacred fort. He never, apparently, lost the vision of his ideal. He had dedicated his life to God, and he might have taken up into his lips the words of Nehemiah: "I am doing a great work. . . . Why should . . . I . . . come down?" How like the thing that Jesus said when one reproached Him: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" The world's meat had no power over Him so long as He could truthfully affirm: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me." It was His sufficient reply to those who challenged Him: "I must work the works of Him that sent me. As it was His perfect consolation to be able to say in the shadow of His cross: "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do."

There is no other sane prescription for Christian living. It is only a truism to affirm the worldliness of the Church in the present day. It is only too obvious that most church folks care far more for

a theatrical performance than for a religious service; prefer a game of whist to a prayer hour any time; would rather dance together to the strains of the latest two-step than "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." No ordinary pastor expects his church members to neglect any secular concern in order to attend to the business of the Church. Let them devote a small portion of their leisure time to the temporalities of the kingdom and the average pastor is satisfied. With millions of communicants, Church membership is only a badge to distinguish them once a week. Such is the modern trend. We are bound to recognize and reckon with it. There is but one rational solution. The reason our people prefer the play to the prayer meeting is that the play meets an admitted need. The reason they shorten their prayers to lengthen their card seasons is that prayer has become merely a form. The reason our young people would rather dance than

"wait upon the Lord" is that the spiritual life has become so dim and misty an affair. When men tell me they stay home on Sunday to "get a rest," I understand that it is because they rank bodily refreshing so far above the renewing of the soul.

And the aspect will never change by going into hysterics and writing damnatory clauses. The present day drift is the legitimate outcome of the present day creed. There will be no turning of the tide except upon the basis of Nehemiah's word. But if men can be brought to rate the eternal above the temporal; if it ever flashes upon them that a lean soul is worse than an emaciated body; if they come to see the relative values of the things of the store and the Kingdom, there will be a new adjustment, and from rededicated hearts will be heard the ringing word: "I am doing a great work. . . . Why should the work cease while I . . . come down?" A great conviction, only, can keep men out of the plain.

But what was the work which Nehemiah considered so great? According to the context it was constructive work. Had he been merely going through motions or marching on dress parade, he could scarcely have affirmed, "I am doing a great work." He was building a wall about the beloved city, adding security to many lives, accomplishing the active will of God. Constructive work is always great. This is the truth we must press home upon our school children—that they are building. This is the thought with which we must fire the ambition of clerk and scientist—that they are building. This is the message we must bring to our flagging Christian zeal—that we are building —and that when other foundations are destroyed our building shall remain.

The only work that ever abides is constructive. To be busy is not enough. Even the ant leaves a hill behind him. The difference between a honey bee and a drone is honey. To be negatively Chris-

tian is not to be Christian at all. But to be positively Christlike, to build something of loyalty into one's own soul, to build helpfulness into the lives of others, to build a "good foundation against the time to come that we may lay hold on eternal life" is to get the best from two worlds. And such is the kind of devotion concerning which a man is able to say in the presence of all enticement: "I am doing a great work. . . . Why should . . . I . . . come down?"

V

THE QUESTION OF A FRIGHTENED JAILER

"When men ask me, 'What is salvation?' I say, Emancipation from everything that holds men down; from the bondage of matter; from the rigor of undeveloped tendencies; from all the infelicities of the lower nature; . . . from low and degraded forms of affection; from the vast realm of inferiority into which men are born. . . . Salvation means to me transformation. It means the fire of the Holy Ghost burning out men's dross. . . . It is positive energetic strength. It is manhood in magnitude. It is the power of God in the human soul. It is new life, new being."—*Beecher.*

"Life is immortal; but the method and time of evolution through which it progresses is in our own hands. Each of us is bound to purify his own soul as a temple; to free it from egotism; to set before himself, with a religious sense of the importance of the study, the problem of his own life."—*Mazzini.*

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."—*Jesus.*

"WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?"

THERE is an attractive local color in the question. It was asked under circumstances themselves dramatic, suggestive. Paul and Silas had been roughly treated the day before. Interfering with a nefarious traffic, they had brought down upon their own heads a storm of fury. The most sensitive spot in a man's whole make-up is, oftentimes, his purse. He will bear any other interference more gracefully than interference with that. He will submit to a vivisection of his creed and a readjustment of his ideals before he will allow a tampering with the business methods of his career. Thus, when Paul broke up the unholy commerce of certain panders at Philippi, it was to be expected that the losers would rebel. And rebel they did in right heroic fashion. With the regulation Tammany Hall appeal against reformers, they stirred the city

into an uproar, and, bearing down upon the magistrates, secured a sentence of lashes and confinement for Paul and Silas.

Night fell at length with Paul and Silas in the common prison, their backs all bruised and throbbing, their feet incased in stocks, and a typical jailer to jeer their plight and guard them from escape. As the hours wore on the place grew quiet. Then hymns and prayers broke on the fetid air. Then an earthquake burst all bolts and shook off all fetters. Then the jailer himself appeared, with livid face and quaking knees, withheld from turning his sword against himself only by Paul's reassuring word. Then the flickering light; the hurried search; the strange confession — and finally the question with which we have to do: "What must I do to be saved?"

Just what the jailer meant it may not be possible to say. I have sometimes fancied he had more reference to salvation from civil wrath than from the "wrath of

the world to come." He can hardly have mounted to any very lofty or spiritual conceptions. Men do not fall asleep carnal and wake up at midnight, even with the crash of earthquake in their ears, refined and holy.

One great fault with the later study of the Bible is the projection of finer meaning which certain phrases have come to enfold, back into the hearts of those who spoke the phrases first. David sang, "The heavens declare the glory of God;" but even David could not guess the full significance of his words to the reverent astronomer of to-day. Solomon uttered a terrific arraignment of the wine glass, but even Solomon with all his wisdom could not feel a resentment so deep and divine as that which blazes in many breasts at the havoc and horror of King Alcohol to-day. Paul wrote of "redeeming grace," and John that "God is love;" but, surely, the ages have done little for the enlargement of human hearts and

human conceptions if we mean no more by those precious phrases than did the disciples of nineteen centuries ago.

So with the question of the jailer at Philippi. Nobody knows what was in his heart as he asked what he must do to be saved. Perhaps the image of a "great white throne" and an all-righteous Judge had limned itself before his vision. Perhaps he felt the throb of a power more vital than that of the Roman eagles. He saw for the first time, perhaps, a new realm of privilege and duty. He had caught a glimpse, it may be, of the eternal purposes of human life. All this, and more, may have been in his heart that day. We cannot say. What interests us particularly is this: that the jailer's question is a universal one to-day; that it has broken away from the localisms and provincialisms of its setting to become the most vital interrogatory in the world; that it means more in earnest souls and on reverent lips to-day than it could by

any possibility have meant at Philippi nineteen centuries ago.

Talk about the burning issues of the day? I say there is not one of them which appeals to so many people. I might hope to interest some of you upon the question of civic good government. Others of you would be glad to discuss the social evils of our time. With others, the question is what to do with the American saloon; with still others, the treatment of the emancipated negro. Here one is asking the road to riches; there, one, the path to power; yonder, a third, the way to be kind. We are, in short, as variant in our conceptions of the predominant issue of life as we are in literary taste or the color of our hair. But this single question asks itself throughout all ages, under every sky, in every human breast: "What must I do to be saved?"

Everyone reprobates the custom of throwing children into the Ganges. But does everyone stop to consider why the

Hindu mother commits such cruelty? She is a mother. Motherhood must have borne into her own heart somewhat of that strongest affection of earth. Because the child is hers, it must be horror to watch it die. Under other circumstances she would give her own life to save the child's. Who knows the smothered agonies beside the Ganges—Rachels lamenting their children "because they are not," mothers tearing their babes from their bosoms and turning homeward with aching hearts? Of the terrible paradox there is just one explanation; in the awful crime there is just one exalting truth: Those Hindu mothers are trying to answer for themselves a question which lay in their souls before their children were born: "What must I do to be saved?"

Travelers tell of the howling dervishes of Arabia; of the zealots of cave and jungle; of fakirs who have held one arm aloft until that member has withered to a stump. These are hideous pictures for

us to contemplate. Our better spirit revolts that such things should be. But we are not to imagine them devoid of meaning. They are weird, grotesque rephrasings of a question to which no human heart is stranger: "What must I do to be saved?"

Every year there go swarming across the hills and vales toward Mecca vast hosts of pilgrims. Thousands of them will never reach their destination. Other thousands will die on the homeward journey. Yet on they crowd toward Mecca—men dragging their weary bodies mile after mile to wash them in a filthy stream at length, women giving up the sight of home and friends for a glimpse of the Prophet's tomb. A senseless spectacle, we call it. Not so. It is intelligible to any thoughtful student. Any man ought to be able to spell it out in the language of his own experience. Those Mohammedans are only obedient to the same impulse which drives us hither and yon—

that ceaseless, burning question: "What must I do to be saved?"

There are a good many explanations, doubtless, of the power of the Roman Catholic Church. With amazing tenacity she holds her converts. She exacts an obedience which makes us both proud and ashamed. What sums are poured into her coffers every year, while we Protestants go begging, often, to raise enough money to meet the pastor's claim and pay the sexton! What church edifices she builds out of the earnings of day laborers and domestics, while we, with all our riches, must frequently be content with barns and sheds for public worship! It takes floods and earthquakes to keep the good Catholic from Mass, whereas a cloud in the west no bigger than a man's hand is large enough to keep most Protestants indoors on Sunday. In spite of shocks and Reformations and imperial decrees, the Church of Rome wields more power to-day than all the rest of our denominations put to-

gether. What does it signify? Simply that the Romish Church, more perfectly than any other ecclesiastical establishment on earth, knows how to meet that ageless question of human wayfarers: "What must I do to be saved?"

But I want to bring this question still closer home. Never mind, just now, about the Hindus or Mohammedans or Roman Catholics. What about the rest of us? The very same fact holds good. Consciously or unconsciously, we spend a good part of our time trying to find out how to be saved. I do not now refer to our relation to the Church, but to the unchurched experiences of life.

In nearly every city there is a fund called the "conscience fund." Only recently I have seen statistics as to its magnitude in Greater New York. Dimes, dollars, sometimes a hundred, occasionally a thousand, come into the city treasury anonymously. From people who failed to pay their taxes—and other thieves;

from men who had cheated their friends and could not be content to keep the money; from perpetrators of unnamed and perhaps unsuspected crimes, as a sort of belated penance, the fund keeps growing. The key is very simple. These unknown givers have been asking themselves the question of the Philippian jailer. They are afraid to live and afraid to die with blood money in their possession. They have not the courage—or the opportunity, perhaps—to restore it openly, so they make shifts with conscience by getting rid of the money as I have said.

It would be interesting to know the motive springs behind the great benefices and charities of Christendom. Not so much in love for others, as in secret hope of redeeming one's own mistakes, have many of our hospitals and asylums been endowed. I know men who are as surely expecting to buy their way into the Kingdom with alms and kindness as the Catholic by his penance or the ancient Roman

with a penny in his dead hand. How many times men have hoped to answer satisfactorily the jailer's question with a ton of coal or a Thanksgiving dinner to the poor! Most benevolence is a sort of penance—with a weather eye on Heaven. And we should sever, I believe, the great nerve of modern benefaction were we to dissociate in men's minds their gracious deeds from their future welfare.

One of our novelists tells of a sinner who wore a rope around his waist to remind him of his wrong. Why to remind him, except that some day he might expiate the crime and redeem his own life from destruction?

Why is it that so many husbands bring home a box of candy or slip an extra allowance into her hand after being unusually crabbed to the wife? Because they want to wipe out, thereby, the stain of their meanness. "What shall a man do to be saved" except he make the sort of reparation near at hand?

The saddest pilgrims to Woodlawn Cemetery are those who go there, not to remember, but to forget. By devotion they hope to discover the cup of Lethe. In frequent pilgrimages they are looking for forgiveness. What former ugliness of spirit they hope to tread out by oft-returning feet! What shame of conduct they long to efface in tears and penitence! They dare not look up into the face of Heaven until their dreary expiation is complete.

Or, take the routine and denials of the Christian life. Few would join the Church except to find the pathway to salvation. Few would devote their time and dollars to Church activity save as means of establishing their hope. Few would turn to Jesus did He not proclaim Himself the door to holiness and Heaven. It is because He meets the imperious question of hearts of every age, that the world is strewn with His disciples. Thus in heathen rite and religious pilgrimage and

Christian routine, by tears and agonies and prayers, that ancient question is rephrased in every land, by countless questioners: "What must I do to be saved?"

But what is it to be "saved?" I wish we could forget our conventional conceptions. Words become soaked with dogmatic meaning. Religious phrases grow as stark and stale as mummies. Time was when such words and phrases were alive. They walked and talked with men. The trouble is that they have been killed and stuffed by theologians, until most men would as soon think of turning to a museum for song and fragrance as to these specimens of taxidermist's art.

What is it to be "saved?" Holland was saved when the waters of the sea were driven back. A ship is saved when the reefs and shoals are past. A house is saved by the streams that put out its flame, or the beams that shore up its walls. A tree is saved by driving the vampires out of its branches and giving it sun and shower.

A living organism is saved by restoring the equilibrium of nature, and by prompting the vital organs to do their work. A prodigal is saved by the memory of his mother's face, or by some sweet reminder from home. But a soul is saved, according to our codes, by a sort of forensic, factitious salvation.

What havoc we have made of a beautiful and vital process! I remember a dear good brother who never closed his testimony in prayer meeting without thanking God for the "great *plan* of salvation." Theologians are forever talking about a redemptive "scheme." Doubtless there is a scheme. God works by plan, in earth and sea and sky. But I believe God's plan is infinitely larger and more vital than we have ever guessed. He has a plan for the stars, but they move in endless variety and pattern. He has a plan for the flowers, yet science assures us that no two leaves are identical in fashion. He has a plan for the birds and the seasons, but

what two birds or seasons were ever quite the same? Perfect flexibility, perfect freedom, perfect vitality is in His plan, until we come to talk of His method of saving men. There we tie Him to a mode, and cripple Him with logic. How many honest souls have been driven away by our mechanical Noah's Ark idea. How many aspirations have been choked by making God a Martinet of method. Jesus gave men bread; we have put them off with a "plan," a "scheme."

I cannot see why the saving of a man is so very different in process from the saving of a ship or tree or human body. You recall the day when the *Paris* lay on the famous Manacles, a threatened wreck. Men are like that. They have missed their reckoning. They have gone ashore. If they lie stranded long enough, they will pound themselves to pieces in the storm. And salvation will mean to them what it meant to the beautiful *Paris*—an effective push back into native element. One of

the sights which always angers me is that of a withering tree. So many of them stood stripped and haggard this summer past. Men are like that, too. Among the boughs worms have built their nests. The roots of life are cramped for room. It takes only a few such seasons to ruin a tree or a man. Then any power which banishes the worms and gives the roots a chance to grow is, to that extent, salvation. There are times, too, when a heart needs just the treatment accorded a human body. It is tired and sick and distressed. Not dogma, not conventional prescriptions, but freshened life, is what it needs. And that, when it comes, is salvation.

What is it to be saved? Go back to Palestine and watch the Master. He saved a ruler by entering his house. He saved a Magdalen by reaching forth a forgiving hand. He saved Thomas by bearing with his infirmities and doubts. He saved Peter by being so much kinder than Peter

deserved. He saved Paul by meeting him upon the Damascus road and opening the persecutor's eyes to see himself. Ah, here is the lesson we are after. Wherever immortal spirits are refreshed and sent back to daily duty, wherever minds are healed of their distempers and wantonness, wherever prodigals are recalled from a life of exile and shame to the paths of rectitude and truth, there, in the measure of its completeness, is salvation.

But I have not forgotten what was said to the Philippian jailer in answer to his question. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." That is the orthodox, eternal answer. But how is one man saved by believing on another? Not, by any means, in the accepted theologic sense. There is no such thing as "imputed righteousness" (even if Paul did talk about it). I do not believe that Jesus' merit was ever yet transferred to the account of another soul. Merit and demerit are as untransferable as person-

ality. No man is saved by believing that Jesus was good, any more than he is saved by believing that Napoleon was great and Nero a scoundrel. A man may take his brother's place in prison; he may even die for him, but he cannot transfer to him his own virtue. Had Jesus died a thousand deaths, He could not make us decent apart from our own desires and cooperation.

Then what is it to "believe unto salvation?" I think the answer is not hard to find. Raphael believed in Michael Angelo until the latter's genius bore fruit in the former's brush. Melanchthon believed in Luther until he became fired with the great Reformer's spirit. Boswell believed in Johnson and became his apologist. The army believed in Grant and reproduced his courage. A boy believes in his father and learns to walk with the same gait, and to imitate his vices. And when a man believes in Jesus he simply waits so eagerly before that life, so reverently bows before its masteries and genius that his

own life takes on the tone and quality of Jesus'. He has "believed unto salvation," as we say. He is "transformed by the renewing of his mind." In the fire of his admiration, "old things have passed away."

There may be various salvations. But the one we need to make us fit to live, fit to serve, and fit to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven, is the one we learn just here—Christlikeness.

VI

THE QUESTION OF A CURIOUS DISCIPLE

"Do the duty which lies nearest thee, which thou knowest to be a duty. Thy second duty will already have become clearer."—*Carlyle.*

"You have a disagreeable duty to do at twelve o'clock. Do not blacken nine, and ten, and eleven, and all between, with the color of twelve."—*MacDonald.*

"Whatever shall appear to be God's will, that will I do."—*Lincoln.*

"Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you."—*Jesus.*

"LORD, WHAT SHALL THIS MAN DO?"

LIKE a shot out of a gun came Peter's question. The episode immediately preceding had been full of stress and tension for him. Three times had Peter been asked to affirm his love for the Man he had denied. Three times had a beautiful obligation been laid upon him. Then, outlined against the morning haze there appeared, under the Master's sketching, the image of a cross with an aged form upon it—the coronation of Peter's service. And following all a plain and unequivocal command; the very same that had summoned Peter from his nets three years before, spoken now with a new solemnity of meaning.

Such might have been the end of the chapter, had John been further away. Peter was not in a talkative mood. It is noteworthy that this most loquacious of the disciples had not uttered a word

throughout the interview except in answer to Jesus' questions. For once, at least, he seemed crushed into silence by the weight of awakened thought. He was shut into a sacred oratory, to cry aloud from which would be profane. He had not a misgiving or doubt or protest. God's will was the one thing he wanted henceforth to do, though it conducted to a cross. But turning, perhaps mechanically, his glance fell upon a fellow disciple, and instantly the spell was broken. For a moment again Peter was his characteristic self; inquisitive, domineering, tactless. For a moment he forgot all else in his curiosity concerning John, and broke out in this eager question: "Lord, . . . what shall this man do?"

I have referred already to the apparent artlessness and spontaneity of Peter's question. It is just the sort of question that most of us would probably have asked, for most of us, like Peter, are curiosity mongers. There is in human nature

no sharper appetite than that of inquisitiveness. Multitudes would be deprived of their regular vocation, were there a law against inquiry. The quickest way to secure an audience is by appeal to the instinct of curiosity. I have seen sick cheeks flush and dull eyes kindle and physical languor disappear, while the invalid canvassed some other patient's prospects, or pried into an item of current gossip. Peter was of that turn of mind, and, immediately that he had heard his own destiny announced, he begged a word concerning the man whose face just then appeared. It is conceivable, of course, that John had overheard the conversation, or at least that Peter imagined so. Possibly the words were a new and vigorous sprout from an aforetime rivalry. Or, perchance, Peter was only sparring for time. At any rate, his old impetuousness got the ascendant, and he blurted out, "Lord, . . . what shall this man do?"

Whatever else the words were as Peter

uttered them, they were a piece of gross presumption. Peter had just been magnificently forgiven. He had been treated with tenderness beyond his wildest hope. He had been reinstated in his forfeited position. And, as if to assure him that all cowardice was of the past, Jesus had sketched out a scene of perfect heroism, a splendid testimony, which should crown the denier's life. It would seem that even Peter must have respected the sanctity of such a season. But the old impetuousness got loose, and Peter became presumptuous.

How often the "goodness of God" fails to lead to anything better than presumption. Men trample on kindness when they would stand in terror of the law. They use forbearance to strain up to some fresh affront. The other day a dilapidated son of Hagar called at the parsonage for alms. I suppose that if I had shut the door in his face he would have gone away quiescent if not respectful. But some-

thing about his extremity appealed to me, and I met his prayer with help. I gave him what he asked, and more. I added a coat and a shirt. And when I watched for a glad look in his eyes, some grateful acknowledgment of a kindness so far beyond his plea, this, would you believe it, is what the ingrate said: "Say, mister, haven't you an overcoat to spare?"

Housewives assert that the only way to keep domestics docile is to require the strictest routine—no extra days, no special privileges. And I fear such is too often the fact. Kindness must trickle through a fine sieve, else it may carry a good servant off her feet. Instead of being prompted to greater diligence and care, she accepts the thoughtfulness as an opening to increasing demands. Some friends of mine were telling me recently that they used to let the cook off every Sunday before noon, and pay her train fare to New York, and only insist that

she return to wash the supper dishes. It was only a little while, however, before she resented all restraint and informed her mistress she would come home when she got ready.

I am sure I have opened a matter which perplexes many a parent. What a beautiful world it would be if no son ever took advantage of his mother's gentleness, or outraged his father's confidence. I see parents bankrupting their very souls to conquer their children by love. Yet here is the brutal fact: rarely does a son or daughter grow best under that régime. Long-suffering is, too often, the quality which gets itself imposed upon. Forgiveness is abused because it is so free. Love is often worked like a town pump, by careless, unworthy hands. Tenderness makes more dolts than heroes, sometimes. The climax of many a mother's sacrificial life is to be turned out of doors by an ungrateful child. I do but voice the bitter experience of countless heart-broken par-

ents when I affirm that love can be too kind.

Our commonwealth is smarting beneath the same chagrin. Every generous soul rejoices in the beautiful lenities, the splendid privileges which constitute our American dower. It is glorious to know that under no other government beneath the skies are liberties so rich and opportunities so choice. But what patriot is he who does not also know that our national charity is provocative of rankest evils? Social anarchy, municipal misgovernment, unconscionable trusts are abuses which grow fastest under the benignant rule of democracy.

So I get back to the truth of Peter's presumption. Had Jesus dealt with him according to his desert, Peter might never have ventured the impertinence of the text. Had he been compelled to sue for forgiveness, like Henry before the Palace at Canossa, he might have prized it when it came. Because Jesus forgave him, even

before he asked, and readmitted him to fellowship, and promised him a certain preeminence of service, Peter used the added grace to do a thing he otherwise might not have dared—to challenge the destiny of John. This is the disposition which often makes us ashamed. Instead of leading us to repentance "the goodness of God leadeth" to all manner of presumption and violent abandon. Antinomianism is the name of a famous chapter in church history, in which men used the grace of God to defile themselves with sin. Antinomianism in every age is one result of the boundless compassion of God. Irregularities men would scarcely practice were the Lord to "mark iniquity;" impieties they would not venture if every impiety were punished; insolence they would never offer to a pitiless and dreadful heaven, they continually reveal because their God is good.

Consider certain matters of church discipline. It is the shameful fact that many

church members would be more dutiful and earnest under the old régime. If the "terrors of the Lord" were still thunderously announced, if the pit were kept well in view, if the "straitness" of the gate and the "narrowness" of the way were still proclaimed, we should be faithful in a hundred particulars, where now we are reckless or slack. We have not been able to bear releasement from our fears. Men get intoxicated with God's goodness. Because he requires so little they offer Him still less. "Where is mother's share?" was asked of a little child who was dividing an apple between her friends. "O, mother don't want any," was the reply; "mother always goes without." Forgetful of herself, forgotten by her child, such is many a mother's portion. Thus men leave God out of their calculations. His part of their time is the part that must not be claimed. His demand upon their money must not be rigorously pressed. He must stand aside for pleasure, greed, and every-

thing of self—so reason men; and let the tenderest demand of all be most heartlessly ignored.

But there was more than presumption in Peter's question; or, rather, his effrontery took definite shape. For one thing, he dared to adduce the case of John. You might think Peter would have been content to "work out his own salvation with fear and trembling." And indeed such might have been the case, had not John just then appeared. But the moment Peter caught a glimpse of John he began to institute comparisons. The path which a moment since he would have been glad to tread was less pleasing now unless John must tread it, too. And the cross at the end of the journey needed fresh justification unless John also was to have a cross. Notwithstanding the lessons and impulses of the hour, Peter stood irresolute and shrinking until John's portion should also be announced.

What a type of humanity is Peter!

How many beautiful hours have been ruined by comparison and contrast! So few are willing to live their own life and do their own part without reference to others. I have visited homes which might have been royalized, but for the chagrin that some neighbor's home was finer. It is not that lace curtains and velvet carpets are conservators of bliss, but that scrim and ingrain are, by contrast, so pitifully cheap. There are men who could live like princes on fifteen dollars a week, could they only forget the fellows who spend twenty-five or a hundred a week. I have watched a schoolgirl comparing her dress with her seatmate's, while discontent spread like a plague upon her face. Half the bitterness of life grows from the prolific root of jealousy. Earth's holiest experiences may be poisoned by a single drop of envy. No heart, no home is safe, after covetousness has entered.

The trouble is men do not trust themselves or their allotment. Medicine reck-

ons with the matter of idiosyncrasy. It recognizes that "one man's meat is another man's poison." That fact, indeed, makes one of the chief perplexities of the profession. If a given drug had invariable effects the practice of medicine would be comparatively simple. Because opium kills one and cures another, because other remedies sometimes allay and sometimes aggravate the symptoms, the practitioner must be forever on his guard. The best physician is he who makes a study of each case.

Yet when we come to God we expect Him to dose everyone alike. Forgetful that men differ in their needs, heedless that what appeals to one makes no impression upon his neighbor, ignoring the manifest dissimilarities of trait and training, we somehow expect God to serve all men alike. Peter forgot that there was not another like himself in God's vast universe. John was a very different type of man. The blow that would heat one would

crush the other. The hand that could mold one would pass over the other without result. Emerson says, "Insist on yourself; never imitate. That which each can do best, only his Maker can teach him. Every great soul is a unique." And so is every humble soul, so far as aptitudes and training. God shows the wonder of His care by refusing to treat men as a crowd. Every child of Heaven is the special study of the Teacher. No man can change his appointment except by doing violence to the consummate plan of God. To accept one's task without bitterness or censure; to be glad in all the special privileges and prerogatives of John; to face the future with confidence that the "Judge of all the earth" will "do right," is the part of an earnest spirit.

But there is one thing more about Peter's question we need to notice. It was an unwarranted attempt to ferret out the mysteries of the future. Peter was ready to use his Master as sort of fortune-teller.

Dissatisfied with the glimpse into his own destiny and glory, he wanted to see the horoscope of John: "Lord, . . . what shall this man do?" How inveterate the impulse is. It might be interesting, if not edifying, to know how many of us have consulted palmists and readers of the future. Any glib-tongued rascal, endowed with a fair amount of common sense, can be sure of an income if he will simply announce himself a soothsayer, and prey upon men's folly. I have sometimes wondered how clairvoyants and fortune-tellers can afford to advertise in high-rate papers. The answer is simple. They can afford it because they have so many high-grade patrons. They appeal to an almost ineradicable instinct, the heart's lusting to know the future.

How many people are forever looking for a sign! It is said that the great Dr. Johnson was a hopeless victim of this madness. He always put a certain foot foremost over the threshold: if the other

foot got ahead he went back to his room and started downstairs again. They say that the house of Hapsburg is haunted by a raven. Every disaster to the family, according to the tradition, has been foretokened by the appearance of the bird. There are few neighborhoods in which a dog may howl at night without sending shudders through every hearer. How quick most hosts would be to send for an extra guest to make fourteen at table. So avidious of glimpses of the future are we all.

The Bible has never been worse abused, I suppose, than by students who tried to write future histories from its pages. Now and again some exegete comes forward with a new interpretation of Daniel's prophecy, or of the Revelation of St. John. Among my earliest recollections is that of certain citizens, closing up their terrestrial affairs, and waiting on the housetops for the Lord "to descend from Heaven with a shout!"—all based upon a hint in Daniel's prophetic weeks. The Bible was never in-

tended as a field glass to spy out the secrets of the future. I sometimes wonder that, with all the Adventist and Millenarian chronology which has been read into its pages, the Bible is not as discredited today as an exploded work on astronomy or physics. Not one page of Scripture was ever given to glut our curiosity concerning events not yet at hand. The Bible is a book for human life. It opens Heaven just far enough to light up the path for pilgrims. It has nothing but confusion and consternation for those who approach it as they would a soothsayer's tent. God has chosen to keep His secrets to himself, and He has no confidants empowered to impart those secrets for fees to cover expenses.

Even Jesus barely drew aside the curtain. He talked of kindness and purity and truth. He revealed the sort of manhood which makes Heaven above or below. He set human life in the blaze of an open sky. But He said next to nothing

to satisfy men's lustings concerning the future. He warned the disciples against those very persons who should come with a message of exclusive information. He refused to tell names and dates. And when Peter broke into a characteristic question concerning the future years, Jesus answered sternly: "What is that to thee? Follow thou Me."

This, then, is the golden word, obedience. The first thing that Jesus ever said to Peter was, "Follow Me." And Peter left his nets and followed Him. The last commandment that Jesus gave to Peter, so far as the record shows, was still, "Follow Me." And Peter forsook his inquisitiveness and paltering and followed Jesus. That is the test of life. The triumphs of our age have not been the outcome of mooning, but of obedience. Obedience to the law of color gave the world an "Angelus." Obedience to the law of steam gave the world an engine. Obedience to the law of electricity has given us

the telephone and trolley. Obedience to the law of God has given the world all its saints and all its heroes. The trouble is, we put something before obedience. Like Peter, we are in search of information: mongers of mystery. And like Peter, if we ever find the path to eminence and power it will prove to be the pathway of obedience. Heaven itself is simply the final attainment of the perfectly obedient life. Instead of asking, "Lord, . . . what shall this man do?" we need to ask that other burning question: "Lord, what wilt thou have *me* to do?"

VII

THE QUESTION OF OLD-FASHIONED THEOLOGY

"A world without a contingency or an agony could have no hero and no saint, and enable no Son of Man to discover that he was the Son of God. . . . There is no epic of the certainties; and no lyric without the surprise of sorrow and the sigh of fear. Whatever touches and ennobles us in the lives and in the voices of the past is a divine birth from human doubt and pain. Let then the shadows lie, and the perspective of the light still deepen beyond our view; else, while we walk together, our hearts will never burn within us as we go; and the darkness, as it falls, will deliver us into no hand that is Divine."—*Martineau.*

" 'Tis the Master who holds the chisel, and day by day
He is chipping whatever environs the form away;
That under His skillful cutting the form may be
Wrought silently out to beauty, of such degree
Of faultless and full perfection, that angel eyes
Shall gaze on the finished product with new surprise—
That even His matchless patience could grave His own
Features upon such fractured and stubborn stone."
—*Anon.*

"For it became Him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."—*Paul.*

"WHO DID SIN, THIS MAN OR HIS PARENTS, THAT HE WAS BORN BLIND?"

But for the presence of Jesus on the scene this ancient question might never have been asked. Blind men were no rarity in the streets of Jerusalem. According to eminent authority, blindness was a common affliction in Eastern countries, as indeed is still the case. And the regular procedure with such unfortunates was to station them along the highways, or at the Temple approaches, where their staring, unseeing eyes might become revenue producers. From the frequency of New Testament allusion to the blind, it would appear that the disciples could hardly turn into any thoroughfare without running upon some such candidate for public pity. So there could scarcely have been anything exceptional in the present instance. Had not their Master paused, the disciples might have hurried

past without token of interest. But Jesus' interest awakened theirs, and they stood for a moment looking down into eyes which, though vacant, must have felt the critical stare.

I suppose they were nettled, too, by the obtrusiveness of suffering upon their Master. They never did quite understand why He should be so liable to constant interruption. They warmly resented men's interference with His seasons of toil and rest. Remember, they would have sent the little children away without a chance to feel His kind arms; and the multitude without the miraculous bread; and the sick woman without her cure, but for Jesus' restraining word. So here: they were impatient with inopportune delay. And their question was in part their protest: "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

How that spirit repeats itself. We have not yet learned a whole-hearted tenderness toward human suffering. We

have improved somewhat, no doubt. We have learned a good many fine lessons of mutual dependence and help. Our hospitals, asylums, and infirmaries of many sorts register our advance from a day in which weakness and incapacity were the objects of nameless crimes. Modern sentiment would not tolerate for a moment the overbearing and brutishness of former ages. Hospital nurses will work all night trying to keep the breath of life in some tiny foundling whose own mother has left it to die, and which, if it lives, can only become a public ward. The execution of a human hound like Czolgosz must not be attended with any vindictive cruelty or horrors. You recall the howl of protest which went up during the progress of the Spanish-American war at the use of explosive bullets. Notwithstanding all which growth of altruistic sentiment throughout the world, it is still hard for the individual to be considerate toward all phases of suffering. Men are still too

much like the herd in which, when one is down, all the rest turn to and gore him. There is an almost irresistible impulse to kick a dead dog. I have seen a lad take a kitten and dash its life out against a wall —not from any particular malice toward the kitten, but in a general impatience with, and cruelty toward, the weak and helpless. Why did the Duke of Guise stamp his heel into the lifeless features of Admiral Coligny? As a mark of revenge, in part; but partly, also, from the deeply ingrained instinct to crush the fallen.

I used to wonder how Torquemada's agents could perform their butchers' work; how the Parisian mob could dip its pikes in the blood of its aforetime leaders; how the witch burners of Salem could steel themselves to so fearful a crime. Further acquaintance with human hearts has taken away my wonder. I now know that human nature runs that way; that we take a sort of satanic delight in the discomfiture of others; that we can

hardly hold ourselves back from open participation in the process which grinds the beauty out of another soul.

So I am not particularly surprised at the conduct of these disciples. Perhaps, if they had expressed the full counsel of their hearts, they would have smitten the blind man instead of asking this question concerning him. They were men; and being men, were impatient with suffering. To be annoyed in the presence of human infirmity and blemish is characteristic of the sex. A man stands and scolds, while a woman hurries for the aconite or camphor bottle. "Where did you get that cold?" or, "What folly have you been up to now?" is a man's first volley in a sick room. How many women will drag themselves downstairs to greet the homecoming husband, rather than see the reproach in his eyes or hear the injured tone in his voice. Even little children learn to choke down their sobs and conceal their ailments in the presence of the august

masters of the home. Most men are worse than a bull in a china shop when they attempt to be useful in a sick room. They jar the bed, and spill the medicine, and upset the chairs, primarily because they lack real sympathy with pain.

So with our attitude toward weakness generally. That spectacle which evokes a woman's best, often shows up a man at his worst. It is the feminine principle which has borne fruit in the gentler spirit of our age. It is the woman instinct which has founded the hospitals and built the asylums for the blind and crippled. It is the mother heart which has room for all manner of weakness and incompetence. Real sympathy is distinctively feminine, and it is only as we men come to acquire it painfully that we excel in those qualities which are the special glory of our age—long-suffering, forgiveness, charity.

I do not wonder that the ancient masters wrought so much of the feminine face into their portraitures of Christ. His

tenderness was such as they had never seen except in their holiest women—their mothers and their wives. A *gentle-man* was almost a contradiction in terms. They could not imagine one except with a woman's face, and so, as they bent over their canvas, unconsciously the lines of femininity and motherhood came out in their pictures of the Christ.

Out, then, on these heathenish notions of manhood! The truest manhood is neither coarse nor harsh. He who most nearly reproduces Christ combines all the strength of man with the grace and delicacy of woman.

But there is somewhat further in this ancient question concerning the blind man. If the disciples were nettled by the presence of suffering, they were also disposed to philosophize about it. It was not so important that a blind man needed sight as that here was a case to discuss. And they could have sat down within earshot of the sufferer, and argued his case in all

its bearings—except that Jesus rebuked their cruelty and meanness. There are times when only a shallow soul will presume to argue. In the presence of another's agony the kind heart declines to fall to asking questions.

Job's famous friends were poor enough, God knows. They have always stood for the sort of comforters a man can do well without. They tempted him to all manner of impiety and madness. But the fact is that they were by so much more considerate than some of our modern comforters, that for seven days and seven nights they sat with him in the presence of his calamity, without uttering a word. So far as the record shows, not a question passed between them. They had nothing to say, and they discreetly held their peace. Whatever Job may have thought of them in the latter stages of his affliction, he could but be grateful for those first few days of silence. Imagine three of us, sitting in the presence of another's

great misfortune, and not discussing the merits of the case. Why, bless your heart! we would have it all gone over and settled to the satisfaction of the community before twenty-four hours had passed.

I was much impressed with an item in the account of the New York tunnel horror. It seems that, just as we were beginning to vent our wrath upon the engine-driver, an inquisitorial process began at the New York Station House. With merciless insistence the officials bore down upon the man. A hundred questions were leveled at his head, when District Attorney Jerome stepped in and said, "Not now; not now; guilty or innocent, he cannot be racked with questions to-day! There will be time enough, later, to get at the facts in the case. Meanwhile the man must be let alone. Whatever his fault, his condition must be respected." And so the dogs were called off. Mr. Jerome may distinguish himself in many noble ways, but I doubt

if he will ever be credited with a finer act than that. It was the prompting of a gracious soul in the moment of another soul's eclipse.

How much philanthropic work is spoiled by over-inquisitiveness. It may be interesting to know a beneficiary's past; it may even be necessary that one should know it; but in a majority of instances we do well to keep all questions in the background. Respect the sanctity of another soul — even though its possessor has appealed to you for bread or sympathy. For the present moment it does not matter whether improvidence, or drink, or bestiality was primarily responsible for his present degradation and shame. He is down; that is plain enough. Let him forget it a moment if he can. Do not make him choke with undeserved bread. Never let him feel that your kindness is an admission price to the lurid picture gallery of his career. Let him revel in the "rarity of Christian charity,"

without being made painfully aware of the string that works it. Jesus never used a probe for spectacular or pedagogic purposes. He went only far enough to find the sore: then he poured in oil and wine. He gave bread and comfort and pardon without playing inquisitor at all.

I fancy that hosts of people have been driven away from our denominational altars by endless catechising. It is so easy to fall into that error, and so hard to recognize that one has fallen into it at all. To every earnest life, and to lives that otherwise seem heedless, there come moments of deep disgust, of consciousness of sin, in which the soul longs to draw down over itself the ample mantle of heaven's charity. They may come—these convicting moments—under the pressure of some great sorrow, in the reactions of business life, at Christian altars. But however they come, and where, they are the work of the Spirit Divine, and must not be trifled with. Nothing is more ob-

trusive at such an hour than religious chatter. Prying into the process of a heart's repentance is the worst impiety. I have knelt at a Methodist altar, full of contrition for my wrongs, and had all of the contrition knocked out of me by the questions of some well-intentioned, but meddlesome, old lady. I have marked the annoyance on the faces of earnest seekers as some glib examiner came crowding in.

"Let her alone," said Jesus to the ready critics of Mary's spikenard. They were figuring up the cost. They were analyzing the motive. They wanted to know why she had not done something else with the money. And they might have driven her away from Christ but for His corrective word: "Let her alone . . . she hath done what she could . . . she hath wrought a beautiful work upon me . . . let her alone!" Such is the warning to apply to our ill-timed zeal. To respect the sanctity of a man's audience with God; to stand back with uncovered brow

in the presence of another's confession; to keep irreverent hands off the starting of new life, is a prime lesson for Christian workers.

But what was the question which these disciples asked? We have been studying external characteristics: what was the question itself? The disciples stood fronting the problem of pain. Everywhere they turned they met it. On the pallets of the sick, in all poverty and want, traced in human agony and tears, they found it. Shut their eyes and ears to the misery around, there was still the ache in their own bosoms, the arrow in their own flesh. Why need anyone be sick or sad? If this be God's world, and He be good, why should His children go limping and moaning with pain? In particular (for the disciples were gazing now into a pair of sightless eyes), why should "this man" be "born blind?"

But you observe they put something else into their question. They did not

ask, merely, why a man should be born blind. They wanted to know whose sin had made him blind. "Master, who did *sin,* this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" That question put an added sting into the fact of pain. Pain was held to be evidence of sin. Steeped in the theology of Eastern thought, these ancients could not look upon suffering without seeming to behold the Divine displeasure. By the horrors of the suffering they measured the enormity of the antecedent sin.

How cruel theology has often been. It has supplied the thorn instead of taking the thorn away. In the days of the Inquisition they would take a man from the rack to poke needles into his eyes; or carry his bleeding form to some fresh torture. If they refreshed him with food and wine it was only that they might prolong his agonies a trifle further. Theology has oftentimes done the same: thrust an additional needle into flesh already quivering with pain; given to broken limbs an

extra tormenting twist. In no department of human knowledge is a "little learning" so dangerous a thing as in theology. The world has been "damned" a good many times "to save a syllogism." May God forgive us that we have so often stood over human disappointments and agony, like those poor comforters of old, asking: "Who did sin?"

Isn't it bad enough to be sick without being incessantly reminded that nobody else is to blame? There is doubtless a vital connection between mince pie and dyspepsia; between nervous strain and nervous breakdown. This is part of the law of the universe. And a famous writer affirms that the day will eventually come in which it will be a disgrace to be sick. That day, however, has not yet dawned, and meantime, to assume that all present physical aches and pains are the results of particular sins, is one of the hugest and cruelest falsehoods ever conceived by the mind of man.

Have you thought why it is so hard to be patient with other men's miseries? Partly because we cannot get clear of the impression that their wretchedness is a judgment of God. The Pharisees drew aside their skirts from the mendicant and leper, lest they be defiled by his sin. They would have nothing to do with a soul under the displeasure of God. Alas! that after nineteen centuries there should be so many Pharisees left! The spirit which prompts one to draw back from creatures of poverty, and makes him cross the street to avoid an object of pity, is Pharisaism unalloyed.

So with respect to the crushing bereavements of human life. I have stood beside parents who had lost their child, and have watched the billows go over them; but the coldest, most staggering wave of all was the thought that bereavement meant punishment. "My God, did I sin like this?" cried a father out of the depth of his distress. "Do you think God

took away my baby because I loved it so well?" moaned a broken-hearted mother. May heaven forgive us that we have ever tried to comfort the comfortless with a wicked barb like that. Yet such is precisely the method I have known certain Christians to adopt, and all in the name of Him who said to the disciples of old: "Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in Him."

Ah! friends, that latter phrase ought to take the sting out of part of our suffering. I do not understand Jesus to deny the retributions of life. On the contrary, no one ever taught retribution in such terms as He used. But He refused to call all suffering penal. He pointed to a realm in which pain is the precious minister of finest loveliness. And then He died of a broken heart, upon a Roman gibbet, to prove that the most sinless life can suffer most of all. I do not assume to unravel the mystery of pain. Not even

Jesus ventured to do that. I do not affirm whether God *sends* pain, or *permits* pain, or what. I only affirm that He can *use* pain, as the potter uses fire to bring out the hues of his porcelain; as the mother uses a fall or a cut to enforce an important lesson upon her child. And I affirm further, as a truism of life, that "it is good" for most of us that we "have been afflicted," else we should never have borne the fairer fruits of the Kingdom of God.

VIII

THE QUESTION OF A NIGHT VISITOR

"No man can learn what he has not preparation for learning, however near to his eyes is the object. A chemist may tell his most precious secrets to a carpenter, and he shall be never the wiser. Our eyes are holden that we cannot see things that stare us in the face, until the hour arrives that the mind is ripened."—*Emerson.*

"The difference between the Spiritual man and the Natural man is not a difference of development, but of generation. It is a distinction of quality, not quantity. A man cannot rise by any natural development from 'morality touched by emotion' to 'morality touched by Life.' "—*Drummond.*

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."—*Paul.*

"HOW CAN A MAN BE BORN WHEN HE IS OLD?"

WHAT brought Nicodemus to Jesus for this immortal interview, the record fails to say. Curiosity, perhaps. Men have gone around the world merely to gratify that impulse. It needs only that a word be suppressed or a mystery announced, and certain natures are aflame with a zeal which knows no quenching. Or, argumentativeness may have supplied the momentum for Nicodemus' visit. There are men who would rather debate than eat. They will discuss anything from the newest wrinkle in fashion to the question of immortality, not so much from personal interest in the theme as from sheer delight in disputation. So it may have been with this ancient Pharisee: he may have come to Jesus only for the chance to unsheathe his debating sword. Or, again, it may have been the furtive glimpse of a new,

bright realm that brought him. It is one evidence of the essential royalty of human nature that men can never again be quite satisfied with mediocrity or meanness in the presence of a higher grace. They are challenged, rebuked, upheaved by the excellence which outruns their present attainment. No man can be the same after one earnest look into the kingdom of possibility. And countless souls will follow that lead as miners follow a vein of ore. Such may have been the significance of Nicodemus' visit—a hunger for spiritual food; the quest of a finer strength.

But whichever of these conceivable emotions was the dominant one in Nicodemus' case, he came to Jesus. And our Scripture is the expression of his astonishment at the answer which Jesus gave to his first inquiry: "How can a man be born when he is old?"

It has been generally assumed that Nicodemus dropped his quest; that he turned

away dismayed, if not disgusted. And there are multitudes of men who would heartily approve such conduct. I doubt if there is a doctrine of Jesus which modern men so thoroughly disbelieve as that which staggered Nicodemus nineteen centuries ago. I know just how men roast it over the slow fires of their sarcasm. I have watched them score it with the keenest infidel blades. I have seen it pilloried and hung in effigy before an admiring crowd. To all of which there is just this to say—and I believe it can be substantiated with vital truth—that of all the Master's doctrines none is more self-evident and philosophical than this. There was nothing in it to bewilder Nicodemus or any man of us. Jesus touched the bedrock of common-sense when He insisted that there is no way into His kingdom except through "a second birth."

The trouble is we have been frightened by phrases. We have missed great truth in metaphor. We have let the theologians

cheat us out of the most beautiful doctrines of human life. We have mistaken shell for kernel. Are Jesus' utterances deep? Their depth, like that of a crystalline lake, serves only to bring the bottom near. He was the least arbitrary teacher the world has ever known. He did not manufacture; He announced. He told men the things that are eternally true. He built no exclusive walls. He merely pointed out essential limitations. Did He bid the rich man to sell all that he had and give to the poor? it was because no soul can ever be divinely enriched except through a process of disgorgement. Did He assure the Pharisees that publicans and harlots should go into the kingdom ahead of them? it was not that He was founding a kingdom of reprobates, but that self-righteousness is forever worse than forgiven sin. So, did He announce to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again?" it was simply His restatement of the truth that no realm is ever open except

to those who have been transformed into its spirit.

Let me show this if I can. We have an Americanizing process called naturalization. At the end of a certain number of years the foreigner is admitted to citizenship. Doubtless, in the interest of practical politics, the term is often shortened. Thousands come to the expiration of the term as little qualified to take the oath and to receive the ballot as when they first landed upon our shores. But that is not the question for discussion here and now. I am only calling attention to the fact that no immigrant is admitted to our civic life except at the end of a period supposed to make him capable of citizenship. He must gain some acquaintance with the principles upon which our government is founded, some induction into the mysteries of our democratic faith, some just appreciation of our sanctities and honors, before we count him worthy of becoming a citizen. He must be endued

with American spirit before he can subscribe himself "American." In other words, he must be "born the second time," of the genius of democracy, before he can see the kingdom of American privilege and freedom.

Whatever else the stories of James Lane Allen may reveal, they certainly are a revelation of their author's love of nature. He has that rare insight into the life of wood and field which enables a man to find poetry, significance, companionship everywhere. To him the birds were teachers; the hemp-fields were open books. But admire Mr. Allen's genius as we may, delight in his ecstasy over a flower or a landscape, I am sure that very few of us would have made so much as he did of a Kentucky redbird or the rustle of a tree. Simply because these things are æsthetically discerned. Eyes and ears alone do not qualify a man to be an Agassiz or Audubon. One might travel from world's end to world's end and find no

shrines at which to worship except in chapel or cathedral. It requires a certain delicacy of feeling, a rare *finesse* of spirit to make one a real worshiper of God in nature. To use the phraseology of Scripture, a man must be "born the second time" into sympathy with nature before he can see the kingdom of birds and flowers.

When Ole Bull invited his boyhood friend Ericsson to come and hear him play he received only a stern rebuff. What use had the man of monitors and turrets for the master's violin? The crash of hammer and scream of lathe were the only music for him. It is impossible to stir certain natures with the power of poetry. As my grandmother used to say of them, they would "rather hear it thunder." Tennyson and Browning are worse than torment to them. There are sightseers who race through an art gallery as if they were going to catch a train, with no eye for anything save a dash of striking color, or

a specimen of unchaste art. The trouble is they have no faculty for the appreciation of pictures. They are creatures of the market-place, masters of finance and shipping. And we come back to Jesus' word to phrase the explanation. A man must be "born the second time," of the artistic spirit, before he can see the kingdom of music or poetry or painting.

It is the record of all reformatory movements that their leaders, for a long time, stood alone. The penalty of being a pioneer is loneliness. Huss had few sympathizers while he lived. Wilberforce was cordially hated for his interference with the slave trade. The purifier of municipal politics will often wonder where the lovers of righteousness have fled. We must catch the spirit which carries such men beyond the margin of commercial prudence, before we can properly appraise their greatness. A man must be "born the second time," into love for his fellow-

beings, before he can see the kingdom of human brotherhood.

I do not believe that any childless woman ever guessed the intensity and self-abandon of a mother's love. There are, to be sure, simulations of maternal kindness. There is a distinctive tenderness which belongs to woman. I have watched the nurses in children's wards of hospitals until, in my admiration for their zeal, it seemed that no mother-hearts could be more responsive. Yet there is a realm of devotion no childless woman, however queenly, can ever enter. A woman must be "born the second time," into the maternal spirit, before she can see the kingdom of motherhood.

This, then, is the truth which Jesus seized upon to describe the mode of induction into His kingdom. As there is no entrance into the kingdom of citizenship, or nature, or art, or philanthropy, or motherhood except through a second birth, so with the kingdom of holiness and

Heaven. A man must be "born the second time," "of water and the Spirit"—by the naturalization of purity and Christ-likeness—before he can enter the Kingdom of God. Is there anything arbitrary or unreasonable about the method which astonished Nicodemus? If you were looking for a description of the transformation of a life, could you find a more luminous expression?

There is a kingdom of darkness, and there is a kingdom of light. Men are in danger of forgetting this sometimes. There is a disposition to shade off the differences between light and dark, between good and evil. Modern philosophy forbids to call human villainies by uncomfortable names. Greed, sensuality, intemperance, these are simply the "prosecution of nature's plan for the advancement of the inhabitants of earth." I read the other day that the pauper who brings into the world children he cannot feed is one of society's benefactors, because he thus

sharpens the world-wide struggle for existence. Most folks have been brought up to look upon drunkenness as a shameful thing, yet a certain writer apostrophizes it as an agent which is solving the negro problem by killing off the blacks. Take the statement that "adultery may be regarded merely as a new experiment in living!" An English author maintains that the abandoned women of our cities are not the worst, but the "best of the lower classes, who cannot get their true match in the sphere where they were born, and must, by the holiest of instincts . . . seek upward by any means." What a different thing must prostitution seem when men have persuaded themselves that it is the result of the holiest instinct, "seeking upward."

Most men, however, will continue to believe that there is a "great gulf fixed" between impurity and chastity, between falsehood and the truth. Vice is not "virtue in the making." Evil is not a phase

of good. There is a kingdom of sensuality and license, and there is a kingdom of self-control. There is a kingdom of perfidy and dishonor, and there is a kingdom of loyalty and faith. There is a kingdom of avarice and violence, and there is a kingdom of self-sacrifice and peace. There is the kingdom of Satan and there is the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. And a man can no more be a member of both kingdoms than he can be both Egyptian and American at once.

How, then, can one more faithfully describe the change which makes a man a Christian than in the ancient words, "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible?" To leave one's meanness for a life of generosity and service; to bring the lower impulses under the mastery of Christ; to forswear the citizenship of thieves and wantons for the fellowship and prerogatives of Heaven, this is to be "born the second time." By no sort of celestial legerdemain, but by the heroic struggle of a soul, with God's

grace to ease the struggle, a man comes up out of his poverty and shame and meanness into the discipleship of Jesus. "Born again," "born from above," "born the second time"—such is the lesson.

This has been the miracle of countless lives. I call to mind a man who came into a cottage meeting which I was conducting. Had I known his record, I think I should have hardly ventured the hope of helping him toward God. He was the profanest man in the village. "Under his tongue was the poison of asps." He was notorious as gambler and debauchee; one of the ugliest customers a man would be likely to meet. God knows why he ever came into that prayer meeting. He scarcely lifted his head, except to flash upon me a pair of the brightest and wickedest eyes I have ever seen. And when the quiet hour had passed he slipped out, apparently unbettered, into the night. Some days went by, and then one evening, during the progress of an old-fashioned Watch

Night service, his face appeared among the rest. Near midnight he came and knelt "for the benefit of prayer." There was nothing spectacular about it—just a brother sorry for his sin. He did not groan aloud, or cry for mercy. He gave no outward sign of inward revolution. But I wish you might have seen his face as he arose to join in the closing hymn. It was fairly luminous. He had found the Messiah, and he went forth from that service to tell his old companions the story of his conversion; to live a beautiful, consistent life. I saw him last summer, and in his face were "the marks of the Lord Jesus." And they tell me that a whole neighborhood is rich in his consecrated labors. You may describe the change under many names—reformation, turning over a new leaf, conversion. I know not any term so vividly suggestive as the term our Master used: he had been "born the second time."

Take such a case as that of Jerry Mc-

Auley. It would be a hard task to explain his transformation according to the principles of evolution. His heredity was bad. His environment was bad. His associates were bad. His life was bad, an insult to public decency, a menace to everything good. A river thief, a drunken vagabond, a hardened jail bird—such was Jerry McAuley when he gave his heart to God. Such was the material upon which the Divine Spirit had to work. But something happened to the outcast; something not called for in the books, nor yet according to philosophic codes. He became a new creation. Out of his old life and into a new, he passed as completely as if he had physically died and been born another man. Our Scripture furnishes the word: he had been "born the second time." He had entered the kingdom of chastity, temperance, and truth by a spiritual birth.

But these are only samples. The world is beautiful in just such miracles—mira-

cles of inebriates becoming sober, miracles of libertines becoming chaste, miracles of doubters becoming disciples, miracles of selfish lives becoming generous and Christ-like. Could I go through a community and pick out the living exponents of Jesus' doctrine of the second birth, there would be material enough to keep the scoffers guessing for a lifetime.

But this truth is also a statement of the greatest necessity of human life. All reformatory work must be based upon, or lead up to, a second birth. The bitterest disappointments of my ministry have been associated with trying to make men live in a realm into which they had never been born. The Icelander will go straight back to his bearskin and blubber from the luxuries of such a land of ours. Those poor little waifs of New York City streets who, by the grace of our Fresh Air Funds, are sent to breathe God's country air, and wander among the wild flowers, are nearly always ready to return to dusty streets

and stifling rooms when the two or three weeks have passed. They have not been "born" into the sweeter realm. And so I find men turning away from their glimpse of the Kingdom, away from its sunshine and freedom and fragrance, to the serfdom and chill of an unholy life.

I have clothed beggars and sent them forth into the world with a warm promise of amendment upon their lips, only to find afterward that they had pawned the very garments which made them decent. I have led men into paths of temperance and self-control, only to see them sneaking back to the old, unrighteous ways. I have received men into the Church only to break my heart over their shamelessness and folly. They had never been "born" into the Kingdom. They were simply aliens upon foreign soil. They had no birthright claim. Most men know what I mean. I would not intimate that they have never tried to mend the old, threadbare life. They have sworn off, begun

anew, reformed, until they were tired and sick of trying. Only God knows the vows which have been registered. Men are not unclean without a protest. They have looked away toward the Kingdom. They have breathed its freshness and touched its treasure. But they have never been born into its safety. And they can never become its citizens without the "second birth."

This is the message, then, of Nicodemus' question. There will be marvelous triumphs as the years of the new century go by. We shall enter realms that to-day are dark with mystery. But as the spiritual is forever higher than the material; as the sublimest power is not electricity or liquid air, but goodness; as the divinest conquest is the conquest of one's self, we shall never be qualified to see the finest visions, or share the greatest victories, except by a second birth. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God."

IX

THE QUESTION OF AN AUTOCRATIC EMPLOYER

"There is but one perpendicular in ethics as in physics. . . . Every right is conditioned upon every other right. Nothing is falser than the saying that a man has a right to do what he will with his own. He has only a right to do what he *ought* with his own."—*Pike.*

"Not what we give, but what we share;
For the gift without the giver is bare.
Who gives himself with his gift, feeds three—
Himself, his suffering neighbor, and Me."
—*Lowell.*

"Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"—*John.*

"IS IT NOT LAWFUL FOR ME TO DO WHAT I WILL WITH MINE OWN?"

THE complainants in the parable of the vineyard must have accounted their case a strong one. Nothing is so hard to bear as injustice. That which makes frustration and calamity most bitter is the sense of having deserved a better portion. No "slings and arrows" ever cut so deep as those of manifest unfairness. To be denied a legitimate fruition, to toil on without appreciation, to get less than a worthy wage, turns men into misanthropes and atheists. Such was evidently the mood of these protestants. They had gone into the vineyard at the first call for helpers. They had borne, uncomplainingly perhaps, the "burden and heat" of a toilsome day. They had beheld the later comers with the sort of sinister regard which men commonly extend to those beneath their grade. And they had struggled on,

persuaded that the master of the vineyard would award a discriminating wage. Judge, then, their deep chagrin, when each laborer in turn received the same amount: those who had toiled the whole day through and those who had labored but one hour, the same award—according to the wage scale of the day, a penny each. They were indignant on the instant, and their wrath poured forth in the hot vials of complaint.

I do not purpose to rethresh this ancient straw. What I want to emphasize is the significant query in which the good man of the house justified his strange award: "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" The words have a familiar sound. They are an expression of the frequent mood of men. They are often in the heart of the modern financier. Suppose he does pay one clerk more wages than another — even give the unworthiest servant the highest wage. Suppose he does cut prices until

a neighboring competitor is forced out of business. Suppose he does take advantage of another's embarrassment to exact an usurious rate, or call in his money when he knows it will work the direst harm. Suppose he does these things, and many more within the letter of the law, whose business is it but his? Is he not at liberty to do "what he will with his own?"

The same plea is often heard in another department of life. One of the most serious arraignments of the modern amusement question is the terrible waste involved. What countless hours and energies are spent over euchre and whist! The time now devoted to card tables would develop a race of literary giants. Most people reduce their Church subscription and curtail their charities before they deny themselves a theater ticket. And there are hosts of young people who are sure they have neither time nor strength to spare until they have attended all the germans and festivities of their particu-

lar set. Our generation has gone amusement daft. And when a halt is called; when some earnest soul points out other open doors for strength and money; when a pastor presses the more sacred claims of life—the poor, the Church, the Kingdom—there breaks forth a perfect chorus of dissent. "What if I do spend more time on cards than on self-improvement? more money on theaters than on human helpfulness? more zeal in fun than on the heroic purposes of life?" "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"

The saddest history ever written is the history of buried talents. We scarcely guess the peerless endowments of men—there are so many wasted powers. Only God knows the lights that have gone out under a bushel; the immortal treasure that has been frittered away; the genius that has been lost. I have heard friends drum on the piano, and have been sure that they might have been interpreting

the masters of melody had they not thrown away their gift. We had in college a certain professor who used to hear our declamations. There was singular charm in his voice and presence. Rumor said that he was able to carry vast audiences off their feet. Yet he never employed his talent except to celebrate some sparkling glass or passing honor. Not one of us was better or more devoted for knowing him. He would not use his gift. It is said that Tissot painted his first religious canvas only a few years ago. He had worked for years before he realized to what holy use he might turn his brush. And I am afraid there are other artists who may *never* awake to their divinest function; they are painting to sense and passion; making it harder for others to be good; never guessing the privilege they forfeit. "Is it not lawful for them to do what they will with their own?"

Consider the truth in a realm more sacred still. How often men abuse the

ownership of love and friendship. We ought to be startled, often, at our treatment of those we love the most.

> "Oft for our own, the bitter tone,
> Though we love our own the best."

Courtesies for mere acquaintances and cruelty for friends; consideration for those who have no claim upon us and hatefulness for those who deserve all our kindness—this is too often our practice. There would be more happy homes if men remembered that marriage furnishes no right to play the boor. I have known men to treat their wives as no human being ought to be permitted to treat a faithful horse. I know children who go starved for the very kindnesses and caresses which some little urchin in the street may receive. And even while I write of it some folks are saying: "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"

The question begs the answer. Such specious pleading meets a clear and vigorous denial. It is only too obvious that

in many ways a man is restrained from doing as he pleases with his possessions. He holds all property subject to certain restrictions and reservations. He is hedged about with all sorts of limitations to his behavior. His liberty is denied by a thousand voices. To abuse is often to forfeit.

Take the matter from a legal standpoint. Not many generations have gone since the day in which a man might kill his slave and maim his son, because they belonged to him. To-day he cannot even beat his horse without danger from the courts. We have societies to contest one's right to maltreat the humblest dumb beast, and societies to deal with brutal parents. Not even a mother's ownership in her child is complete enough to permit her to starve it. Jail yawns for the father who fancies he can do as he pleases with his offspring. Let a farmer attempt to sow his land with thistles: though his title be undisputed, his hand must quit

its task. He has no right to make his own acres a nuisance to his neighbor. He cannot use his own property to the hurt of some one else.

After the terrible explosion in Tarrant's chemical works in New York City, a question arose as to the amount of explosives stored in the building. The proprietors had evidently assumed the right to do as they pleased in the matter. Why should not a merchant stock his building to suit his purpose? Simply because the law denies to any man the right to endanger other lives and interests. And the famous drug firm was held liable for heavy damages.

According to what is known as the law of "eminent domain," an ownership above one's own, if it becomes necessary for a railroad to cross a certain farm, or a dwelling stands in the way of a projected public improvement, the legal owner may object in vain. Men have protested, with oaths and pitchforks, against such usurpa-

tion. But the protest was merely by-play to State or County. Law assumes the right to take any man's property at any time for certain uses and for a fair consideration. All legal tenure has that restriction, and he who does not like the scheme may move to Labrador or Iceland.

Taxes mean the selfsame thing—restricted ownership. Part of every acre a man owns, and of every dollar he earns, belongs to the government for the maintenance of public schools; for the making of improvements; for the salaries of the very men who collect the taxes. He who has no children of his own must help to educate his neighbor's children, and the veriest backwoodsman must help pay for macadam roads and marble courthouses. He cannot do what he will with his own. Not even with respect to his heirs. In some States he cannot sell an acre of land without his wife's consent. He cannot will away the interest of his ungrown children. There are kinship

claims with which he is bound to reckon, and if he fails, the State adjusts the matter regardless of his whim. So in a multitude of ways this truth is reinforced, that, even from a legal standpoint, a man may not do as he pleases with his own.

But this truth gathers cogency as it reaches higher realms. There are sanctions infinitely weightier than those of common or statute law. Law as expounded by the courts leaves a thousand loopholes to lawlessness. Men may be conscienceless scoundrels without jeopardizing their property or their necks. There is latitude enough this side of prison for men to damn themselves and ruin their fellows. I suppose that Jay Gould was one of the most monumental robbers of modern times; yet he lived within the letter of the law. He certainly did not use his hands to pick his associates' pockets. He never broke into railroad offices to carry away their assets. He simply made use of the common practices of

Wall Street, and employed his wealth to drive others to despair. No one will ever know the hearts he broke, the suffering he caused, the homes he wrecked. A whole Street breathed freer when it knew that Jay Gould was dead. Ah, friends, there is something wrong with a business which makes its gains out of others' privation and pain. It is one thing to gain by legitimate increase of value, by honest enterprise. But to use one's means as a knife to let out another's blood, and then to revel in the blood, is the part of hawks and wolves. Some one says that "the first passion in the American world is not to produce more, but to get what some one else has produced." "Money-making by exchange is virtual robbery, and is only prevented from becoming legal robbery by the imperfection of the law."

Take the common method of inflating or depressing a market. A man buys all the stock he can at panic prices; then booms the stock until every trader wants

it; then sells it at figures that bear no relation to honest values—and leaves the purchaser to discover how great a dupe he is. Such was Jay Gould's method. Such is the ordinary Wall Street method. It is simple appropriation; making money without producing it; fraudulent transfer from one pocket to another. One must lose for the other to win. Would to God that every such unearned dollar were the true mirror of its source! To see on every coin the record of its former owner's heartache; to trace all the suffering which men's sharp practices entail; to follow the tragedies of those who went down to enable the winners to rise, might rob commercial plunder of its joy. No man has the right to employ his wealth or skill to defraud his fellows.

Or, take the bargain craze. I have no notion that any word of mine will upset the bargain counter, or keep our women away from it when the newspapers cry its wares. I only want to call attention

to the real significance of the proceeding. It is an attempt to clothe one's self and to stock one's household for less than the purchased articles are worth. Granting all that may be said in favor of the propriety of getting the largest value for one's money, I still maintain that bargain hunting is shark's business. If a thing is worth a dollar it is good morals to pay a dollar for it. It is not good morals to cheat the tradesman out of his profit, or the manufacturer of his return, or the factory hand of his wage. I do not want the blood stains of piracy or highway robbery on the merchandise I buy. It is never lawful, in the Christian sense, to use one's own to defraud another.

Just here we touch the labor problem. There is, doubtless, an arrogance of labor. Too many strikes have been conceived in malignancy and born in evil. The walking delegate is often a mischief-maker, earning his salary by making trouble. But the tap root of the misunderstanding

between labor and capital is, originally, the insolence of wealth. Employers forget that privilege carries with it a corresponding duty. They assume the right to use their possessions entirely as they please; cutting employees' wages to the last penny the employees will bear; turning off veterans to make way for younger blood; importing the cheapest labor they can find. A new truth must get hold of men of wealth—the responsibility of riches. It is theirs not to hoard, but to use; theirs to carry gladness into a multitude of homes; theirs to render the load of drudgery less grievous; theirs to bind the employees with hooks of steel. No man who makes a sophism of our Scripture question is fit to be rich and prosperous.

So of power. Too many folks assume that power means exemption from burden. The average politician is after the immunities and emoluments of office. Few remember that power carries with it

obligation; that a man must stoop in proportion to the height of the eminence on which he stands. You recall what Jesus said when certain of His disciples were clamoring for power: "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon (or, lord it over) them. But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." Our generation is evidently a long reach removed from such conception of the exercise of power. Yet such is the divine—the sane—prescription, and we shall never attain to the true dominion of the world until we adopt Christ's method.

One other realm I want to mention—scholarship. Scholarship has too often been used as a club to beat out the brains of faith. Here was Thomas Paine's mistake. Nobody denies his gifts; most people

admit the kindness of his heart. He was never built to be a destroyer of faith. I have often wondered that he was able to feed his own heart on the hard husks of unbelief. But he seemed to feel it his prerogative to scatter his poison wherever men would receive. Hence he went up and down the land, snatching the crumbs from hungry hearts, knocking the crutches from trembling faith, burning men's household gods before their very eyes—one of the biggest hearts and most reckless vandals of any age. According to the highest code he had no right to use his doctrine as he pleased.

Thus we reach the loftiest bearing of our question. I have called to mind that certain uses of one's possessions are not even legal. I have tried, also, to show that usages permissible from legal standpoints are interdicted on moral grounds. Now I want to speak of a realm above both these, a realm in which our truth is spiritually discerned. It is not sufficient

for a man to keep the law. It will not even do to consult the ethical code. A man must learn the spiritual meaning and purpose of his possessions. There is no absolute ownership among men. We are merely "stewards of the manifold mercies of God." We live on His acres; we manage His estates; we bank His treasure. Whether our property be land or truth or talent, we hold it by His grace; the title is in Him.

This is the truth of the familiar parable in which the lord came and reckoned with his servants. There is a reckoning on every investment of God in us. The award is always according to men's employment of God's investment. The highest purpose of wealth is the enrichment of souls. A Rockefeller ought to be the finest type of man. He who allows his money to shrivel him would better, a thousand times, be poor. Position means opportunity to expand. Talent is like the equipment of a gymnasium; it must make

its owner a stronger man. To have, and not to use for self-improvement, is worse than not to have.

But possessions have an even higher function than that of self-development. Money will do more than pay wages. Power can work greater miracles than mere offices of duty. Talent has a higher mission than that of display. These gifts are granted to hasten the advent of Messiah's kingdom. And every time a man uses his means to bind up broken hearts; wherever a ruler makes his throne the bulwark of truth and kindness; wherever a soul employs its strength to remind men of holiness and Heaven, the "Kingdom comes" in grace and beauty.

"O Lord, I pray
That for this day
I may not swerve
By foot or hand
From Thy command,
Not to be served, but to serve.

"This, too, I pray,
That for this day

No love of ease
  Nor pride prevent
  My good intent,
Not to be pleased, but to please.

  "And if I may,
  I'd have this day
Strength from above
  To set my heart
  In heavenly art,
Not to be loved, but to love."

X

THE QUESTION OF A READY CRITIC

" 'Tis only when they spring to heaven that angels
Reveal themselves to you; they sit all day
Beside you, and lie down at night beside you
Who care not for their presence, muse or sleep,
And all at once they leave you and you know
them." —*Browning.*

"We are full of these superstitions of sense, the worship of magnitude. We call the poet inactive, because he is not a president, a merchant, or a porter. We adore an institution, and do not see that it is founded on a thought which we have. But real action is in silent moments. The epochs of life are not in the visible facts of our choice of a calling, our marriage, our acquisition of an office and the like, but in a silent thought by the wayside as we walk."—*Emerson.*

"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: . . . neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."—*Paul.*

"WHY WAS NOT THIS OINTMENT SOLD FOR THREE HUNDRED PENCE AND GIVEN TO THE POOR?"

It never occurred to Mary, probably, that her gracious deed would bring down criticism upon her. She had long been waiting for an opportunity to do something for Him who was always doing something for her. But He was so constantly busy with ministry to others, there was scarcely an opportunity for others to minister to Him. And, indeed, it seems rarely to have occurred to the disciples that He who filled their days with benefaction might sometimes be hungry for a tender office toward Himself. It is one penalty of the unselfish life, that it must often go without those gracious requitals, which, if the world could know, would enrich its service.

The guests were busy at table when

Mary slipped into the room. Engrossed as men are wont to be when a tempting repast is before them, none of them noticed the quick motions of the woman. They talked on, unconscious of the most tender tribute which was being rendered in their midst, and only as the pervasive perfume filled the room did they look up at all. Then what a picture! There, at the foot of the couch on which the Christ reclined, sat a woman as perfectly unmindful of the disciples' presence as they had been of hers; her face aglow, her soul in her eyes, as she wiped the dear feet with her hair. An empty spikenard box near by told the lavishness of the gift. No word, I fancy, was spoken at the first; there are acts so full of holy sentiment and devotion they compel men into silence. Then Judas found his voice: "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor?" Such was the unblushing question of the financial man of the Apostolic company.

Judas evidently thought he was making a good point. This was the Teacher who for three years, nearly, had been inculcating lessons of practical religion. He had been trying to educate men to the pitch at which they should prove their love by helpfulness and charity; cut short their formal prayers, sometimes, to answer a cry of need. He had often inveighed against the senseless extravagance and criminal luxuriousness of the day. Yet on the feet of this same Teacher three hundred pennyworth of perfume had just been poured! Judas wondered that his Master could keep still. How many poor the money would have fed. While they were sitting there, enjoying the rich fragrance, men, women, and little children were going supperless to bed. Surely, Mary would have done her Master more signal honor had she dedicated the same money to suppers and creature comforts for the poor. To express her whole devotion in a single act of womanly senti-

ment; to pour this treasure upon One whom it could not possibly enrich; to spend fifty dollars in a perishing perfume instead of coats and shoes for wretched outcasts, seemed reckless waste.

So reasoned Judas. And under ordinary circumstances his reasoning would have been correct. I have never believed John to be quite fair in his estimate of Judas. Except that Judas had turned out to be a traitor, John would never have stigmatized his conduct on this occasion as that of a thief. Because, later, Judas proved to be a rascal, John conceived that he must have been one when he dared to criticise the ointment. We are constantly throwing back upon innocent deeds the lurid light of some later crime. Because Benedict Arnold turned traitor, men have looked for treachery all through his life. Yet I believe there were days when, in the breast of that same Arnold, there beat a patriotism as strong and fine as throbbed in Washington's or Franklin's. The fa-

mous Abelard was not, necessarily, a sensual man at heart because, after years of monastic devotion, he lapsed from virtue and betrayed the beautiful Heloise. We ought to give men credit for what they seem to be, believing, rather, that in an evil hour they fell from their high estate, than that all their lives they were vagabonds and wantons. We have never been just toward Judas. We have condemned him in everything, because he was treacherous in one. But there was a time when Judas really loved his Master. Days there were in which he, too, saw the heavens opened; moments when under the power of some great passion he, too, could have died for Christ. It is passing credence that Jesus should have selected an inbred ruffian to preach His Gospel for three years. Judas was once as promising a disciple as John or Andrew. And I cannot see any monstrosity in his unfortunate criticism of Mary. It was just like his hard, commercial head; just the comment

to expect from a man who was grasping a new truth. And I notice that in the other account of this same incident all the disciples joined in the protest: "To what purpose was this waste?"

There was, as I have said, good common sense in Judas' comment. I am grateful to live in a day when there is accounted to be more true religion in bread for hungry children and "*Herald* Free Ice Funds" than in all high altars and swinging censers. Ingersoll might not have been the scoffer that he became if in the early days, when his infidel opinions were forming, he had seen less hunting down of heretics and more Christian helpfulness and love. It is said of a famous agnostic author that, after listening to a recent sermon on the religion of kindness, he turned to one of our bishops and remarked: "If they had preached that kind of Gospel when I was a boy I, too, might have been a preacher."

Time was when the grandest thing that

a man could do for God was to build a temple to Him. I have recently been rereading a description of Solomon's temple, and I do not wonder that the Roman conqueror paused spellbound when he beheld it. Such marbles as are rarely seen to-day, columns of wondrous size and beauty, gold in the most elaborate profusion, made it a spectacle almost beyond description. But that Jewish temple was characteristic of a day when beggars starved in the streets and cripples went unpitied. To-day we build no such mammoth piles. We have no cathedrals to compare with those of Milan and Cologne. But our land is dotted over with institutions of charity and benefaction. If the churches have decreased in magnificence and grandeur, the hospitals and asylums have multiplied a hundredfold. For men are beginning to believe they may leave some splendid shrines unbuilt, while they pour out their means to bind up broken hearts and relieve the orphans' need.

The noblest memorials of Egyptian glory are her vast pyramids. What massive structures they are! We can hardly estimate their cost. They drained the treasure of heathen lands; they wore out generations of human toilers—to form a mausoleum for dead men's bones. There are still some citizens, I suppose, who are elaborately providing for an immortality of memory in bronze and stone. The world will not be able to forget them because it must forever stumble over their monuments and sarcophagi. Notwithstanding which, the sentiment is growing, that a man can afford to lie under a plain pine board, if need be, while the world remembers him in some Christly institution of his endowing; some fund for waifs and sufferers.

The Church can never repeat the enthusiasm which preached and fought the Crusades. That marvelous spectacle of whole nations moving toward the Manger shrine and Tomb will never be seen again.

But there is a far vaster army of men and women, with no regalia or pomp about them, who feel that they bring Christ greater honor as they seek out His loved and lost throughout the world. Despite the decay of creeds and churches, there is more good religion in the world than ever. You remember the vehement commander who caused the statue of St. Peter to be pulled down and melted into coin, that St. Peter, like his Master, might go about "doing good." Such is the spirit of our age. Men are learning to translate their worship into blessings for the needy. There is less patience with churchly forms, but more with men and women. There are less long prayers, but more heavenly ministries on earth. There are less devotees to altars, but far more reproductions of the Christ; far more to hear Him say, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." The spikenard is being turned into bread.

But this is not the whole story. When Judas attempted to generalize he made a failure. There are certain conditions under which it is grander to pour spikenard upon the Master's feet than to feed the poor or help the outcast. Judas carried his utilitarianism too far. There were some beauties he could not measure with his yardstick. There were real values not reducible according to his tables. The rainbow has no commercial rating. Not everyone can appreciate the glory of a sunset. No sane man would think of estimating the worth of an oratorio by holding his hand against the bellows or counting the metal in the pipes. Some things must forever stand above our scales and crucibles. Those three hundred pence would have been poorly spent on loaves and coats that day. The trouble with all practicality is that it goes too far. It runs mad, sometimes, as I believe it inclines to do to-day.

Here they are cutting away the Pal-

isades to make paving stones for modern roads. If they keep on cutting, it will not be long before we shall look in vain for those grand old landmarks. In the commercial sense, stone in a good roadway is worth more than stone in picturesqueness. Steamers will make quite as good time to Albany, I suppose, when the Palisades are gone! But it has always seemed to me that those stone bulwarks of the river have a value entirely apart from their intrinsic worth in slate and granite. Nobody will ever estimate the satisfaction they have brought to human hearts; for by such things in nature are men made more fit for earth and Heaven. If men shall ever lose the capacity to be moved by the beautiful, it will not make much difference what sort of pavements they then may travel.

We had in my college days a cadaverous professor who went among us by the nickname of "Digamma"—in token of his lifelong devotion to the obsolete Greek

letter of that name. Poor, stoop-shouldered little man, I can remember how we used to pity him his thankless quest; and wonder if a generous beefsteak would not do him more good than additional Greek learning. He was in the economic sense a "non-producer." He increased the world's supply of corn and wheat not a single bushel. He did nothing, directly, to maintain the nation's credit. He kept on studying year after year, delving in ponderous tomes and ancient manuscripts, growing leaner all the while, until it seemed that a good healthy breeze would blow him away. But here is the stubborn fact: that, when all the grain produced in his day has been consumed, and the bodies that consumed it have moldered back to dust, his great discoveries in language, the new light he brought to ancient puzzles, the fine shades of meaning he evoked will be blessing generations as yet unborn.

Mozart never held a plow or drove a

plane. He had to be supported in idleness, as some would say, in order to produce his masterpieces. While gunsmiths were forging weapons, and masons were laying stone, he was only writing music. But to-day those ancient muskets are out of service. Most of the walls his contemporaries built have crumbled. But the sublime harmonies he wrought, unimpaired by passing decades, still thrill and bless the world. I suppose that in one sense Munkacsy might better have been a grocer's clerk or shipbuilder. He mixed his colors and held his brush as though eternities were depending upon his genius; and died poor at last. But that is not the whole story. I know of at least one man who was led into the Kingdom by Munkacsy's painting—"Christ before Pilate"—and I doubt not that coming ages will reveal scores of souls made more strong and spiritual by gazing upon even cheap reprints of that wonderful picture.

Here is the image of a Man who, ac-

cording to the record, "went about doing good." Wherever He came blind eyes flew open and withered limbs grew strong. He fed the multitudes and eased the sufferers. And yet, when all is said, if Christ's special mission was to dole out miraculous bread and heal the lepers, He failed. He left more hungry folk in Galilee than He ever attempted to feed. There were more lepers unhealed than He ever healed. Though His path through Palestine was like a sunbeam, there were many places on which the sunbeam did not shine. He came from Heaven to do a diviner thing than to fill men's stomachs and to allay their pains. He came to bring holiness to men; to fill the world's night with prophecies of morning; to make for Heaven by putting Heaven in human hearts. And men may be most like him as they break their alabaster boxes, sometimes.

But what is there to take with us from a study of this Scripture? What spe-

cial word to recur to-morrow? One reason that husbands and wives do not make better work of living together, lies, I believe, just here. Every woman has something of the spirit of the woman who broke the spikenard box. It was peculiarly a woman's tribute. And every true woman brings to the man she loves just such an offering. She is glad to take a thousand steps and to meet a thousand demands of wifehood, motherhood. But life means more to her than merely keeping a house clean and purveying the kind of food her husband likes. She loves! And we husbands—we let her sew on buttons and darn our stockings, and bear our children; and then, if we keep her supplied with pocket money, and put good clothes upon her back, and sometime bring home a diamond ring, we think that is enough. And have, withal, as little appreciation of a woman's heart as had this Judas. Some wives would be willing to forego a new spring dress or a pattern

hat for Easter if they could receive more spiritual evidences of our love.

If there is one subject that can be counted upon to stir unpleasantly the average man it is the subject of "Foreign Missions." The idea of sending good money after bad heathen! Are there not enough sinners right here in our own community? Where is the sense in trying to convert the Hindus, when home streets are thronged with children begging bread? I have every sympathy with the poor heathen here at home. They ought to have the Gospel first. "Beginning at Jerusalem" was the ancient commandment. But I deny that there are additional sinners here at home because there are fewer in Bombay. I doubt if the thousands we send across the sea have made our own poor poorer. Rum makes a larger figure in the account of poverty than do "Foreign Missions." Meantime, I am debtor to every man whom I can help, whether he lives next door or in

China. And until the light of our great civilization breaks clear around the world our debt will not be paid.

One thought more. There are people who believe in the Church as a sort of social club, or distributing agency for charity. According to their notion the Church's work is done when the strangers have all been welcomed and the poor have all been fed. But there are great crying wants which cannot be met with good-fellowship and loaves of bread. There are heart-windows which can never be thrown open by a hearty handshake. There are spiritual enrichments that souls are needing. There are beautiful transformations which are to make men fit for Heaven. We are dealing with men immortal, and sometimes the breaking of the spikenard box is more precious than the feeding of the poor.

XI

THE QUESTION OF AN IMPRISONED PROPHET

"He grieves more than is necessary who grieves before it is necessary."—*Seneca.*

> "Ah, the endless afterwhiles!—
> Leagues on leagues, and miles on miles,
> In the distance far withdrawn,
> Stretching on, and on, and on!"—*Riley.*

"Unbelief is only a phase of impatience. Let us keep ourselves from mental panic, for that is the close ally of pantheism. In the higher realms of intellectual life and activity it is good for men to remember this benediction pronounced upon those who seek and hope and quietly wait."—*Selby.*

"The kingdom of God cometh not with observation."—*Jesus.*

"ART THOU HE THAT SHOULD COME, OR LOOK WE FOR ANOTHER?"

THIS question from the prison at Machærus was a veritable heart cry. John's uncompromising mission had ended abruptly some few months previous. He was paying the usual penalty for being a prophetic voice. The days went wearily, we may believe. Enforced inaction is keenest torture to a temperament such as John's. Used to the freedom of field and forest, untrammeled of spirit as the mountain airs that once had played upon his face, a stalwart unconquered soul, it was simply maddening to hear the key turn in the lock. Every prison mess made him freshly hungry for the former "locusts and wild honey." Even the visits of his few devoted friends served but to accentuate his sense of helplessness. He was a caged eagle, wearing his wings against the unpitying bars that shut him in.

Nor was the news from the outside world calculated to abate John's fever. History had been making rapidly during the few months of his imprisonment. The Man whom he had announced, and afterward baptized at Jordan, was hardly meeting John's expectations. John had described Him as a mightier spirit than himself, whose "fan would be in His hand," and who would burn the chaff with "fire unquenchable." Yet, from all accounts, this later Prophet was so far from heroic in His method that Magdalens dared to look up into His face, and little children nestled in His arms. John was amazed, bewildered. Had his uncompromising zeal gone all for naught? Finally, when he could bear the agony no longer, he commissioned two of his disciples with the eager inquiry: "Art thou He that should come, or look we for another?"

For which most rational inquiry John has been subjected to all sorts of criti-

cisms. He has been called peevish, ungenerous, skeptical. Clothing Jesus in all the majesty and grace of modern reverence, men have wondered how John could so far stultify himself as to phrase this question. Strange that he should not trust the very Personage whom he had heralded. Pitiful to be asking at that late day in his calendar: "Art thou He that should come, or look we for another?"

Somehow I can find no fault with the question. It was both legitimate and sane —phrased with all the eagerness and frankness of the man. Remember he was depressed, dispirited. This was not a question of the sunlight; it was a question of the night and storm. It was born amid doubts and fears. We must always make allowance, in our estimates of men, for the inevitable sag of human nature. No man can be at his best day after day. No soul should be judged during its eclipse. A certain eminent Presbyterian was

asked by his pastor if he "enjoyed the full assurance of salvation?" "Well, I am sure I am saved," was the reply, "but I never *enjoy* anything when the wind is East." There are nervous and physical reactions to which every human being is heir. After strong effort or long suspense they come. And it is no more fair to judge a soul during such seasons of reaction than to take the tone of a Stradivarius violin when the strings are down.

I have heard of an eminent actress who, after carrying an audience clear off its feet by her magnificent acting, would go to her dressing room and cry like a little child, vowing she would never stand before the footlights again. One of our most successful ministers told me that he could scarcely get out of the church quickly enough after the sermon was through —so complete and deadening was his sense of failure. I saw a woman pass through a terrific ordeal of domestic sor-

row without tear or audible cry. For days she carried a stricken household upon her own brave heart. She met all demands on strength and nerve power. She seemed to be made of steel. But when the first agony was past and the household resumed its normal routine, she lapsed into such a paroxysm of sobs that it seemed as if she would die.

William Cowper could never have written his most famous hymn had he not passed through the torment of great depression. It was after one of those terrible seasons, in the gloom of which he so completely lost his way that he was at the point of suicide, he wrote:

> "God moves in a mysterious way
> His wonders to perform."

Philip Melanchthon was often misunderstood and sometimes reproached by Luther for the streaks of melancholy to which the former was a victim. As matter of fact, he could no more beat off the

depressing seasons than he could prevent the sultriness which often follows a thunderstorm. It is the part of a high-strung nature to be easily thrown out of key. Elijah under a juniper tree is a true picture of human life. No man can continue to live at high tension. The fire test of Carmel was inevitably followed by the corrosion of human doubt. He who flies highest falls farthest when reaction sets in. Even the Master was no stranger to these moments of transient eclipse. It was in one of them that He cried out in the Garden, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful." It was human, only, that after comforting the disciples, He should need some one to comfort Him. So there was no unworthiness in the Baptist's cry for a fresh certification of his faith. It was his heart that spoke in this ancient question. He had toiled so earnestly for years that when the reaction came he scarcely knew what to believe. "Art thou He that should come, or look we for another?"

But there was more than depression in the Baptist's question. Enforced inaction had made him morbid. Out under the open sky, with the sting of the wind on his cheek, John would never have given utterance to this heart cry. He would hardly have doubted the issue of the campaign so long as his own powers were still actively engaged. Activity is a saving thing for most folks. Activity would have saved John from this depressing hour. But shut away in prison, his vehement hands denied their zealous function, his fearless voice drowned in dungeon walls, no wonder that he was staggered. Dr. Hillis tells of an imprisoned knight who one day heard his own troops go by. They were looking for him, it seemed. Close up to his dungeon they came, only to turn away. His shouts went no further than the wall. He could only groan and pray—an enforced idler when the Cause was needing men. Then he began to doubt. He doubted men and

God; and died with the chill of unbelief upon his heart.

It is when life is forced to feed upon itself that decay begins. Activity, turned inward upon the soul, begets corrosion. There are certain animals, which, denied their native freedom, will gnaw their own bodies. Let their energy be pent up within cage or pen, they will spend that energy destroying themselves. So with a human soul. Refused the normal channels of expression, it burrows into itself. The life prisoner goes insane from cumulative ennui.

Idlers are generally misanthropes. To have nothing to do is the greatest curse of mankind. Dr. Greer says: "I am often asked the question; I am asked it every week, sometimes every day in the week, and sometimes a great many times in a day—How is a young woman to live today who has to earn her bread? It is not always an easy question to answer. But there is another question much harder to

answer—How is a young woman to live to-day who does *not* have to earn her bread?" How is a young man to live in the absence of great ambition and strong activity? How is anybody to live worthily and well without ceaseless, passionate toil?

The papers tell of a young man, a Princeton graduate, who was killed by twelve hundred dollars a year—and idleness. He had no discoverable bad habits. His associates were good. But at twenty-seven years of age he found himself freed from the blessed necessity of work. He figured it out that he could live comfortably on his twelve hundred dollars a year, without turning his hand to active toil. But instead of his living on the money, the money lived on him. "Doing nothing is killing me," he wrote to a bosom friend. And shortly afterward he finished up the job with his own hand, and died a suicide. The best cure of ennui is action. He whose hands are full of holy duties will

have small room in his heart for unholy doubts. It is the seasons of enforced or self-elected idleness that kill men.

Here, I believe, is the secret of the pessimism of old age. There is something very pitiful, yet thoroughly philosophical, about the way old folks have of grieving for the "good old times." The "good old times" were the times in which they were active; the times which they helped to make. Old people remember the tingle of former days—days in which it was certain that the procession was going somewhere because they were in the ranks. Never could they doubt the issue of a struggle to which their own strength was committed. By a sort of sublime, sweet egotism to which no earnest soul is stranger, they believed in the thing which they were doing, for this most cogent reason—that they were doing it. Whereas now that hands and feet are sorely disqualified, and they are locked up in the prison of old age, like another John the Baptist they

begin to worry about the ways of the world and to believe that the best days are past. How could it be otherwise? It has always been so. It will be so with us if we live to be old; we, too, shall look back upon those days in which we lived and labored as the Golden Age of Man. Patience with those who are living in the past, and resolution to stay in the ranks that we may keep young longest, is our present duty.

But John's question involves certain other considerations. It was based, in part, upon a misapprehension of the facts. He had not heard the whole story. Shut away from the busy world in which Christ was moving, he got only scraps of news. It is said that the blind and deaf are nearly always suspicious. The part of the beauty they cannot appreciate, the part of the narrative they fail to hear makes them skeptical about the rest. All men are more or less like that—mystified by fragments of the story; confused by glimpses of the

truth; cynical concerning the portion of the landscape which lies in shadow. It is natural to distrust the movement whose full sweep we cannot follow.

Diminished chords are the soul of fine harmony. But a diminished chord, standing alone, is unmusical. Hear it apart from the chord from which it was modulated and the chord into which it passes, and it only offends the ear. But let it be struck in its proper musical relations and it is full of richness and power. Here is our trouble, often. Like John shut away in Herod's prison, we cannot hear the full harmony of events outside. Our ear is offended by what we hear. But could we hear the whole, our hearts would be full of song. It is the part we miss which makes us skeptical and sour.

Here is the philosophy of the old proverb that the "eavesdropper never hears any good of himself." It is not that the good is never spoken, but that the eavesdropper takes his cue from a single

phrase or word. A part of a sentence is often utterly misleading; the same words have totally different constructions. Thus no hearer is qualified to draw conclusions unless he hears all that is said. If he will tarry at the keyhole, he must be there early and stay until the whole interview is through.

Here also is the reason for the popular distrust of certain great reforms. The multitude see one aspect of the movement. They hear only the violent words of some incautious devotee. They are offended by the obvious extravagance and folly. And without waiting to balance the facts they sit in judgment. It is in the political history of the present generation that some of the most vehement opponents of the "free silver heresy" were themselves once committed to its support. I assume that they were honest formerly and are honest still. Their conduct, then, is susceptible of but one interpretation—they had not formerly viewed the case in all its

bearings. So I assert that there are ardent Protectionists who would be Freetraders, and Freetraders who would be Protectionists if they understood all the facts; radicals who would be converted to conservative standards, and *vice versa,* if all the story were told; Episcopalians who might be Methodists, and Methodists who might turn into the Episcopal fold, were the whole history of denominationalism at hand. Festus was wrong when he assumed that "much learning" would make a man "mad." It is rather the "little learning" that drives men into intolerance and fury.

Here, too, is the root of skepticism in religion. It is because "we know in part, and . . . prophesy in part" that we miss the way. It is because we "see through a glass darkly" that we condemn the color of the skies. The book of nature is mystifying because we can spell out only a sentence here and there. I have no patience with the doctrine that faith is better than

knowledge. Faith itself must be grounded in knowledge. Only as a man plants his feet upon facts can he strain upward in Christian faith. Knowledge is final and best. To "see face to face," and to "know even as also I am known," will be Heaven.

But there is one more lesson for us in the Baptist's question. Part depression, part inaction, part misunderstanding—the question is characteristically somewhat more. It is the cry of a soul to know if it has failed. John had put the best years of his life into a preparation of the Messiah's path. Indeed, he had done nothing else. He had been set apart from his birth. He had spared neither peril nor pain. He had staked his all upon the issue. He had toiled with undoubting heart. And now that active service was over, and he lay rotting in a prison, he wanted to know if he had failed. If Messiah had not come John's years had been thrown away. A heart's full agony was

in the question he sent to Jesus that day. Trembling, prayerful, fearing almost to hear the answer, he asked: "Art thou He that should come, or look we for another?"

There are many such experiences in life. Some day a boy graduates from college. He has been looking forward to that rare moment. For years he has fed his heart upon its joy. Hope has gilded the horizon with brilliant touches. But graduation day comes and passes—not so very different from any other day—and he stands facing a busy, selfish world. Men do not take off their hats to admit him to their markets. Even with his parchment in his hand he still must fight his way. God help him in that moment in which he looks down at his diploma and asks, "Is this it? Is this what I have toiled for so many years?"

To love and to be loved is the precious dream of young womanhood. Not scientific attainment, or linguistic skill, or po-

litical eminence, but love, is the glory of womanhood. Her best excellence grows out of love.

"'Tis woman's whole existence."

Whatever else she gives up, no true woman ever gives up the hope of being royally loved. Let the day come and her heart find its mate. Let her be faithfully loved and happily married. Will all her girlhood dreams come true? (They might oftener come true if men were all they ought to be in chivalry and honor.) But hours will come—she will keep them from human sight if she be womanly—hours in which, as she sits gazing at her wedding ring or staring into space, her heart will cry: "Is this all of love? Did I hope and yearn for this?"

Or take the truth in its highest bearing. Some day a man gives his heart to God. Through all the years of wandering and folly he never quite doubted that he should do it, sometime. A mother's prayers have been in his ears again and again.

He has never been able to forget altogether the home altar and the big family Bible. Skeptical often and cynical sometimes, he has nevertheless cherished near his heart the hope of finding God. And now that at length he has found Him, he expects the whole world to be changed. He looks to see temptation disappear; all skies to be kind and blue. He has left the old life behind. Yet, as he goes down town next morning, the stores and the folks are the same. God love him as the question comes leaping to his lips: "Is this all it is to be a Christian?"

How true to human experience to-day are the words of John. How they rephrase themselves in modern hearts. We understand his agony by our own. But John got his answer. His faith had not been misplaced. His service had not been wasted. Messiah had truly come. "Go—tell John," was Jesus' word to John's disciples. "Show him again these things which ye do hear and see." "Blessed is

he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." The answer was, evidently, enough. Doubt died in John's heart that day. It will also die out of ours, if we honestly ask and honestly wait for answer.

XII

THE QUESTION OF A TROUBLED RULER

This, it seems to me, is the form that our religious life is more and more assuming—just a great inert *overfullness.* Religion is met, not, as it was a thousand years ago, by a man in mail upon the threshold, with a sword or an ax or a firebrand to kill it out—the brutality of that folly is obsolete; not, as it was a hundred years ago, by a cunning diplomatist in the vestibule with wiry words and smooth-tongued irony to circumvent the newcomer and make even Religion herself faithless and untrue—the cowardice of that folly is dying away; but nowadays, when the new stranger comes up to the door, the opposition is just the great, impenetrable, passive fullness of the house she tries to enter."—*Brooks.*

" 'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for! my flesh that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
A face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever: a Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!"

—*Browning.*

"Whatever the surprises of the future may be, nothing will ever surpass the moral grandeur of Jesus as it shines and glows in the canonical Gospels."—*Renan.*

"God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that He might redeem them that were under the law."—*Paul.*

"WHAT SHALL I DO, THEN, WITH JESUS?"

PILATE's part in this ancient tragedy was, obviously, a most unwilling one. To begin with, he had small sympathy with the internal feuds and furies of the Jews. He looked upon the whole race as common cattle who had passed under the Roman yoke. How far they chafed and gored each other was of no concern to him so long as they wore the yoke and thus served his Roman masters. In the second place, he could but recoil from the obvious meanness of the entire transaction. Pilate was a fair man, as Roman governors went; a man of tolerance and kindness. Moreover, he was in Palestine as the administrator of that magnificent legal system on which, as on a broad foundation, our codes and equities were built. He desired no part in a process which, only too evidently, had been conceived in malice and born in crime. What-

ever local boundaries the Prisoner had transgressed, He certainly was not deserving of the present cruelty and shame.

But Pilate was further deterred from participation in the crime by the bearing and beauty of the Prisoner Himself. No such Face had ever looked up into the Roman governor's before. Pilate had seen solidity; such majestic calm and repose he had never seen. Men of innocent eyes and beautiful brows had sometimes stood before him. But no such brow and eyes as these. Cross-examination only confirmed the unwillingness of Pilate. There was "no fault" to find. Just then came the warning message from his wife. Ah, it was Pilate's better self that cried out before the rabble: "What shall I do, then, with Jesus?"

He, evidently, did everything he could, except the one thing which would have satisfied the heart and conscience of modern Christendom. He openly declared the injustice of the deed. He tried to

make the Sanhedrin assume the burden of the crime. Then, catching at a technicality of local jurisdiction, he sent the Prisoner to Herod. Again and again he appealed to the accusers' sense of justice; even going so far as to invite the populace to take the matter out of the elders' hands by the grace of executive pardon. And when finally, according to John's narration, Pilate caused the unresisting Victim to be scourged, it was not so much in wantonness as in a real compassion, that the poor, torn back and anguished eyes might shame and pacify the people.

I have an honest pity for this Roman. We have not been quite fair or generous toward Pilate. Church history has piled his name with an obloquy he never quite deserved. He has been judged by our greater light; condemned by our finer ethics. Under ordinary conditions Pilate would have been a good man. With even the faintest encouragement of his more

worthy impulses, he might have won an immortality of praise. He wanted to do well by Jesus. For a time he stood in the breach and held the bloodhounds of Judaism at bay. But he made one terrible mistake. Instead of asking his question of his own heart, he asked it of the people: "What shall I do, then, with Jesus?"

I have selected the question, however, not for its local interest and color, but as a typical question for all the ages. The judgment hall in which Pilate uttered these words, and later washed his hands, cannot be certainly named. The city in which the tragedy occurred has been for ages a ruin. The names of all save a few of the leading actors in the tragedy have passed from the memory of man. We cannot make pilgrimage to Pilate's tomb with tears or curses. Every figure in that tremendous scene has gone—save His who looked up into Pilate's face of old. Renan once said, "Whatever else may be taken from us Christ is left." And

the question of one man nineteen centuries ago has become the burning question of more human hearts than beat on earth when Pilate asked it first. Had he answered it aright we might not even have its record; because he failed to answer it with honor we cannot escape its stress and urgency. "What shall I do, then, with Jesus?"

Have you considered what it means that, after nineteen centuries of change, men still are asking the selfsame question. I submit it as a modern miracle, that, considering all that has been taken from us, "Christ is left." It was the saying of Voltaire that the Christianity of Jesus could never survive the nineteenth century. About a hundred years ago Thomas Paine wrote at the end of the first part of his *Age of Reason:* "I have now gone through the Bible as a man would go through a wood with an ax on his shoulder. Here they lie, and the priests may, if they can, replant them. They may,

perhaps, stick them in the ground, but they will never make them grow." Mrs. Southerland Orr, in her life of Robert Browning, says that as Carlyle was one day passing an image of the crucifixion, he looked up at the figure of Christ and slowly muttered: "Ah, poor fellow; your part is played out!" Diocletian received a monument for "having abolished everywhere the superstition of Christ." Only the other day a prominent citizen declared concerning the life and doctrine of Jesus: "I tell you, there is nothing in it." Yet the fact is, that this exploded fiction has more hold on the heart of the world than at any previous moment. All the infidelic thrusts and sneers of all the ages have not availed to choke down the question: "What shall I do, then, with Jesus?"

Not quite a half century ago Strauss launched his famous "Mythical Theory." According to which theory no such wonderful person as Jesus ever lived except

in the minds of His apostles. The apostles *imagined* Christ. They materialized Him out of the star dust of their Messianic hopes and training. So imbued had they become with the Old Testament teaching concerning the Messiah that, by and by, they idealized a person to meet their own demands. Thus the Christ of the canonical Gospels was merely an ordinary man, magnified by men's adoring love or commercial scheming into the Eternal Son of God. For a time it was thought that Strauss had dealt Christianity a fatal blow. Theologians went in mourning many days. Unbelief made such a bedlam as had not been heard since the Tower of Babel fell. The world had lost its Christ!

Yet before a quarter century had passed another scholar penned these words: "Whatever else may be taken from us Christ is left. It is no use to say that the Christ revealed in the canonical Gospels is not historical. Who among His

disciples, or among their converts, was capable of inventing, or even of imagining, the life and character revealed in the Gospels?" Thus skeptic has answered skeptic until, to-day, there is hardly an intelligent doubter who denies the historicity of Jesus' life and labors. And for the average man the Christ stands forth with greater winsomeness and personal attraction than ever in ages past.

I know there is a modern irreverence in handling the data and doctrines of Jesus' life on earth. General Lew Wallace has thrown some added side lights upon His person; and Marie Corelli has undertaken an explanation of His miracles, upon the basis of certain admitted laws of magnetism and hypnotics. Every little while an enthusiastic searcher comes forward with a new Rosetta stone to translate some part of the marvel of Jesus into the language of common life. Others like Sheldon and Stead have essayed to project the historic Christ into

the streets and problems of our age. Through all of which this fact stands forth, that the Son of Mary, whether or not we pronounce Him Son of God, is the central figure in the world's gaze today. Jesus is in the novels and the philosophies, in the sociology and in the drama of the age, simply because men cannot speak from human hearts to human hearts and leave him out. And some who "came to mock have remained to pray." Lew Wallace became a Christian while writing his *Ben Hur*. Marie Corelli came out of the Catholic Church, but she has found a diviner Christ than the Churches have sometimes preached. Tolstoi turned back from his early infidelity to find rest for his heart and hope for humanity in Jesus and the "Sermon on the Mount." Intelligent study cannot indefinitely ignore Him. Christ is in our age as He never was in any previous age.

"The healing of His seamless dress
Is by [more] beds of pain,"

and in more thoroughfares than ever. And the question of Pilate is alive with the intensity and passion of countless earnest hearts: "What shall I do, then, with Jesus?"

It is amazing how men always come back to the question they try to dodge. Pilate did not mean to do anything with Jesus. He asked, only, to be excused from rendering a decision. He tried to shove Jesus off into the custody of the Sanhedrin; then, of Herod; and, finally, of the people—anything to be rid of the embarrassment of passing personal sentence against Him. But the authority was in Pilate's hands, and the question came home to him for answer. Men may juggle with great issues for a time, but the moment arrives in which great issues assert their claim. I remember how men parried with prison reform in England. It is hardly possible to imagine the horrors of English prison life in the eighteenth century. Englishmen had

been frequently asked what they ought to do with the English convict. But they had generally eased their consciences by referring the whole matter to prison officials and politicians. Finally, however, the question thrust home with such angry vehemence that England felt called upon to answer it herself; and a new era of humanitarianism had dawned.

I call to mind, also, how averse we were to interfering with child labor in factory and in shop. Everybody knew it was wrong. Every kind heart smarted with a sense of its injustice. But everybody wanted everybody else to attend to it. And the result was that taskmasters continued to drive little children to the task, until one day—please God such righteous spasms may come a little oftener—men took the question up into their hearts and answered it like men.

Modern business method has less and less sympathy for the weaker member. Trade is a mill which often grinds the

miller as fine as his flour. Count, if you will, the merchants who have been driven out of a comfortable business by the pitiless whip of the "Trust." Make tally of the salesmen and superintendents, once earning a generous wage, who would be grateful to-day for an income of five hundred or a thousand dollars a year. So the crowding process goes on. But the question of responsibility will not down. It keeps crying in the ears of men. And it will continue to cry until we answer it with honor: "What shall I do, then, with the weaker member?"

So with respect to any fine talent or gracious opportunity or sacred trust, the question comes ever again: "What shall I do with it?" We cannot be always dodging. Shifted responsibility comes home at last. I recall the story of an ingrate, who in the years of his prosperity turned his own mother from his door; but who found her one morning upon his doorstep, dead. Driven away, she had

come back to die within sound of his voice. You remember the cry of Ahab when the long-abused prophet came, "Hast thou found me, O, mine enemy?" He who dodges issues feels always hounded. No soul can travel far or fast enough to get away from duty. Sometime in the darkness or in the day it will appear. This is God's world, and His agents work ceaselessly to make men do their duty. Soon or late we must render our decision concerning every pressing claim.

So with men's attitude toward Christ. No Herod can ever take Him off their hands. In certain famous murder trials the question of legal jurisdiction has been warmly debated—one county seeking to shift to another the burden of notoriety and expense. There can be no such question concerning this Prisoner. Jesus is on trial in the court of every heart. With the same look as that which He lifted to the despairing Pilate's face; with the same silent majesty as won that Roman

governor's praise; with the same appealing goodness as challenged every noble impulse of His judge's nature, Jesus stands before men to-day. "There is but one question of the day," said Gladstone a few years before his death, "and that is the Gospel." No soul can have a duty ahead of its duty to do something with Jesus. Everything else can afford to wait on that. "What shall I do . . . with Jesus?"

Men say they have not time. Not time for what? Not time to take one's bearings by the star of Bethlehem? Not time to lubricate the axles before starting on a journey? Not time to be fed with the heart's own bread? Not time to let in the light? Time for everything except that which is most vital and eternal? For shame! The most fruitful time a man ever spends is the time he spends in getting right with God—answering the question which Pilate tried to dodge: "What shall I do . . . with Jesus?"

Before I suggest the answer I want to note one thing more about Pilate's question—the significance of a single word in its phraseology. "What shall I do, *then?*" "Then" is resultant. It refers to something already done. In view of what Pilate had promised concerning Barabbas, what was he to "do with Jesus?" How earnestly Pilate wished the populace had demanded this gracious Prisoner. It was in the hope of such a choice that he had made the offer. He could not believe that those who had seen this Prisoner's life, and fed upon His bounty, would chose Barabbas over Jesus. Yet so they had chosen, and there was utter desperation in Pilate's voice as he asked the immortal question: "What shall I do, *then*"—after the choice of outlawry in preference to goodness—"What shall I do, *then,* with Jesus?" Pilate, alas, was not free. He had permitted his own hands to be tied. And he came to the decision concerning Jesus, mortgaged by a previous mistake,

unable to do what his heart was prompting for the Christ.

How true all this is to life. We spend our "money for that which is not bread," and then go hungry for the bread our money would have brought. We miss the strategic point of opportunity, and then limp through life complaining that we never had half a chance. We mortgage our hearts, and then are grieved that we cannot give clear title. How many men are poor, not from any niggardliness of Heaven, but as the result of their own improvidence and folly. "If I only had the hundreds I wasted when a boy," cries the clerk in Wanamaker's or Marshall Fields'! "If I only had not wasted my privileges and despised my birthright," sighs the might-have-been Edison or Paderewski. "If I only had not soiled my heart with licentiousness and shame," moans the libertine in the presence of holy womanhood. Alas, that men so often cut the roots which would

bear fruit in after years! Alas, that they should be forever crippling themselves for future usefulness and conquest!

Samson chose a woman's favor and found himself helpless against the Philistines when they came. David chose carnage and was denied the most sacred privilege of building a temple to his God. Peter chose self-preservation, and had to be refined through a long process of repentance before he could feed the flock of Christ. Julius Cæsar chose preferment, and died by the hand of the men who might have been his friends. Napoleon chose empire, and was beaten at Waterloo. Webster chose popularity, and went away from earth with the consciousness of having failed. These, all, came to the supreme test, handicapped.

And so men come to Christ. A previous choice disqualifies them. They stand in the presence of Jesus, wishing, like Pilate, to do the noble thing, but swept onward past their wishes by the stern logic

of a former decision. Some lower choice, some choice of wealth or ease or popularity, prevents them from making the highest choice of all. The seed divine has to germinate in a soil already choked. What can a man "do with Jesus," so long as he holds allegiance to some other king of life?

I will tell you what he can do. He can do the thing which the great majority is doing—send Jesus to His cross. Jesus stands for the ideal in human life. And every time a man turns his back upon the ideal of manhood he assists in a fresh crucifixion. No wonder it is so hard to touch certain hearts, "seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh." Then, there is another thing that the modern Pilate can do with Jesus. He can pass compliments about Him. David Strauss, who labored so diligently for the destruction of Christian faith, admitted that Jesus was "the highest model of religion." The great French agnostic,

whose *Life of Jesus* was called a thunderbolt to Christianity, declared that "Jesus will never be surpassed." There are more compliments for Christ to-day than ever. But frozen politeness may barb the most perfect diabolism of spirit. It is no particular virtue to admit the sweetness of the rose or the glory of the stars. "Why call ye me Lord . . . and do not the things which I say?"

There is one other thing for a man to do with Jesus—which Pilate did not do. He can enthrone Christ as the Master of his life.

"If Jesus Christ is a man—
And only a man—I say,
That of all mankind I will cleave to Him,
And to Him will I cleave alway.

"If Jesus Christ is a God—
And the only God—I swear,
I will follow him, through heaven and hell,
The earth, the sea, and the air."